Effective Gatekeeping Practices

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What is Gatekeeping?

The responsibility of all counselors to intervene with students engaging in behavior that may pose a threat to client welfare (Foster & McAdams, 2009).

Estimate of 3% students identified as “problem students” (Kerl, Garcia, & McCullough, 2002)

ACA Code of Ethics (2014)
- F.6.a. Evaluation — provide ongoing feedback and formal evaluations
- F.6.b. Gatekeeping & Remediation — remediation and dismissal
Current Gatekeeping in Admissions

Students identified the program admissions process as the first important component of gatekeeping (Foster, Leppma, & Hutchinson, 2014)
- Need for clear, advanced notification of gatekeeping policies
- Concrete parameters

Admissions gatekeeping typically involves:
- General application
- GRE/GMAT test scores
- Resume/personal essay
- Letters of recommendation (seen as unhelpful; Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014)

On-campus interviews are fairly consistent across programs and generally thought as most important (Swank & Smith-Adcock, 2014)
- Admissions decisions should include consideration for “potential success in forming effective counseling relationships, and... respect for cultural differences” (CACREP, 2016, p. 5).
- Some administer assessments to evaluate interpersonal skills (e.g., Carkhuff Rating Scale, faculty-developed)
- Personality tests may lead to litigation

Background checks are typically NOT required for admission (Erwin & Toomey, 2005)
- This may occur based on the site of field experience (ex: school)
- Some programs require background checks; cannot make completion conditional without reviewing those at admissions (WKU).
Effective Gatekeeping Practices

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What are we looking for?

Top 5 problem areas needing remediation (Henderson & Dufrene, 2013)

Boundaries
Basic counseling skills
Advanced counseling skills
Receptivity to feedback
Openness to self-examination

What are we looking for?

Study participants (ACES members) believe that student behaviors needing remediation initially surface early (Henderson & Dufrene, 2013)

- 51% in entry-level skill courses
- 19% in entry-level didactic courses
- 11% in admissions
- 10% in practicum
Current Remediation Models
Southwest Texas State University Gatekeeping Model

- Student notification prior to admission and throughout courses
- Meet with Advisor
- Faculty Review Committee (3 members) determine course of action
- Recommendation by the committee is made to the chairperson who notifies the student of the committee’s decision
- Student can agree/appeal
- Documentation throughout process

(Lumadue & Duffey, 1999)

Current Remediation Models cont.
An Emergent Theory of Gatekeeping Practices

Pre-admission screening
Post-admission screening
Remediation
Remediation outcome

(Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010)
Remediation Example

Remediation for Christian student refusing to work with LGBT population

PLAN: as of May 2010

- Attend 3 workshops/diversity trainings for LGBT
- Read 10 articles about improving effectiveness with LGBT
- Work to increase exposure with LGBT population (ex. Gay pride parade)
- Familiarize with ALGBTIC competencies
- Submit monthly papers with summary of what she learned and self-reflection
- Must be completed by Dec 2010

(Keepon v. Anderson-Wiley, 2011)

Litigation

Dismissals based on "personal" reasons versus "academic" reasons are more likely to attract lawsuits

**Due Process** (Procedural & Substantive)

A dismissal for disciplinary reasons requires oral or written notice of the charges and presentation of evidence against the student, as well as an opportunity to be heard, academic dismissal does not require any hearing or formal proceedings

(Kerl et al., 2002)
Put it in Practice

**PROCEDURAL DUE PROCESS**
- Remedial actions/expectations must be **clearly defined** in advance of their execution
- Receive distinct faculty supervision
- Support is regularly evaluated, reported, and thoroughly documented

**SUBSTANTIVE DUE PROCESS**
- Remedial action/expectations must be **relevant** to compelling interest(s)
- Be comparable with the scope and severity of performance deficiency(ies)
- Be corrective rather than punitive in intent and application

(McAdams & Foster, 2007)

Legal Considerations

**Fundamental Fairness Consideration** (McAdams & Foster, 2007)
- Remedial actions/expectations must be accessible within the context they are applied
- Be adaptable to individual differences in students
- Be consistent with accepted practice

Most counselor education programs dismiss students only as a last resort (Foster & McAdams, 2009)
- Nearly 90% of the programs have dismissed at least one student over a 5-year period for reasons related to student professional performance

Documentation should detail student concerns, remediation actions and provide sufficient time to accomplish remediation goals (Hutchens, Block, & Young, 2013)
Notable Cases

v Southwest Texas State University (Kerl et al., 2002)

v College of William and Mary (McAdams et al., 2007)

v East Michigan (Word v. Wilbanks, 2010)

v Augusta State University (Keeton v. Anderson-Wiley, 2012)

v Webster University (Schwartz v. Webster University, 2011)

Suggested Gatekeeping Practices
Where to start

Everything begins with evaluation

- Most schools have a performance evaluation given periodically

Basic Steps (Lumadue & Duffey, 1999)

- Formulate operational definitions of expected student behaviors
- Provide these policies and procedures in writing to students upon entry into the program
- Routinely examine students on both academic and nonacademic criteria

Nonacademic Criteria: Personal Characteristics

- Being open, flexible, positive, & cooperative
- Willing to use and accept feedback
- Aware of impact on others
- Able to deal with conflict
- Able to accept personal responsibility
- Able to express feelings effectively and appropriately

(Lumadue & Duffey, 1999)
Gatekeeping During Admission

Numbers versus instinct
- Possible conflicting messages for faculty members during recruitment

Develop fair and accessible expectations and procedure
(Foster & McAdams, 2009)
- Professional Performance Reviews
- Student handbook and syllabi – outlines expectations/remediation

Provide regular opportunities for discourse (Foster & McAdams, 2009)
- Able to discuss expectations via orientation, coursework, advising, clinical supervision

Gatekeeping During Remediation

Formally communicate with students needing remediation
(McAdams et al., 2007)

Emphasize a commitment to assistance and remediation
(Foster & McAdams, 2009)
- No current standard of remediation
- Many schools mention remediation in their handbooks but very few have specific outlines for goals or behaviors
- Get students involved in communicating their concerns regarding peers
Reminders

Fear of overreacting to a situation causes concerns to be handled informally
- Formally handle situations – document meetings

Cannot promise confidentiality of concerned students
- Subpoenas demand names
- Explicitly state terms when student comes in with concerns

Documentation

DOCUMENT EVERYTHING
- Include direct quotes when available
- Begin documentation as soon as possible and update frequently
- Consult with colleagues and possibly legal counsel
- Know the state laws regarding consent for audio/video recording
- Signatures indicate that everyone was at the meeting and understand the terms and conditions
Further Suggestions

• Schedule check-ins during remediation process
• Maintain clear expectations: ask student what they heard
• Place accountability on the student
• If possible, don’t meet with student alone
• Consider student’s perspective: supportive versus punitive

References


Hutcheson, N., Block, J., & Young, M. (2013). Counselor educators’ gatekeeping responsibilities and students’ first amendment rights. Counselor Education & Supervision, 52(2), 82-95.

Keeton v. Anderson-Wiley, 664 F.3d 865 (11th Cir. 2011).


