

TO: Deborah Montgomery-Coon  
FROM: Madie Trolinger  
SUBJECT: Bradley Mental Health Services Improvements Report  
DATE: December 14th, 2022

Deborah Montgomery-Coon,

The attached report contains necessary information regarding the mental health crisis on Bradley's campus.

In the report, the problem of a lack of additional resources for college students suffering from mental illness is explained in great detail in regard to its relevance to this college campus. The library-based research that I conducted is presented in the form of possible solutions. I provide my opinion of the best possible solution for improved mental health services after careful consideration of the possible solutions. Please keep in mind that my proposed solution is narrowed to the context of its feasibility.

I look forward to further discussing and answering any questions you may have about the mental health crisis on Bradley's campus. With my proposed solutions, we should be able to improve our mental health services soon!

Thank you,

Madie Trolinger

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## **ABSTRACT**

Bradley University's counseling center provides a wide range of services for students who are struggling with mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, OCD, and more. However, many students at Bradley are either unaware of these services or need more than what's already provided. Analyzing this problem, the main solution would be to extend the counseling center's hours, but unfortunately, this is not possible at this time. Outlined below are three solutions that would help students get the most out of what Bradley's services can do and also find resources for late-night and weekend crises.

## **INTRODUCTION**

According to the United States Surgeon General, mental health can be defined as "the successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity." (Kleinfelder et al. 1). Although not all college students struggle with mental illnesses, for those that do, counseling options are a necessity. With the recent COVID-19 concerns, students are seeking counseling now more than ever.

Subsequently, the goal of this report is to present the research I have completed and offer three solutions for improving the counseling services on Bradley's campus: raise awareness, hire more therapists, and make virtual advancements such as using specialized apps to connect students to therapists or track their moods.

## **PROBLEM DESCRIPTION**

Mental health has been a point of interest for decades. In fact, "campus mental health and counseling programs began in the early to mid-twentieth century" (Whitaker 2). Many societal events influenced the mental health movement over the years, including but not limited to the rise of women's rights and LGBTQ+ rights. With all of our modern social and political issues, especially the COVID pandemic, mental health needs have reached an all-time high. Multiple studies have been conducted recently to see not only whether or not colleges and universities are making mental health a priority, but also if students know about and use the services available on their campuses. Results from these studies found that "despite the high prevalence of mental health issues, college students tend to underutilize mental health services" (Lee et al. 4) and "that although the majority of distressed students know about and use university mental health services, some might still need services but do not know about or use them" (Yorgason et al. 6). Not only that but "most of the research on mental health needs at U.S. universities has focused on undergraduate students" (Hyun et al. 2). Overall, there is still much work to be done, even now as the COVID-19 pandemic is coming to its close.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Despite having a limited budget to allocate to its counseling program, Bradley does have effective and low-cost options available to improve its mental health facilities. Unfortunately, the available hours cannot be changed at this time. However, if more therapists were to be hired, lengthening the hours could be possible. Keeping that in mind, there are other ways to solve this problem. Our main goal should be to make mental health services accessible, affordable, and

available for all students. I strongly believe that exploring these three solutions will improve students' academic performance and general happiness.

### **Raise Awareness**

Bradley University has a strong counseling program with several wonderful staff members. That being said, it does have limitations in what it can do for its patients. On its website, the counseling center is listed as being able to help with personal, relationship, developmental, academic, career, and other issues. Students who are just starting to think about therapy may be intimidated by society's implied "seriousness" of such a choice. In all reality, therapy is for all sorts of struggles, whether they are associated with a mental illness or not.

All that being said, mental health stigma is still a very real thing and has been around since the beginning of the mental health movement in the early 1900s. While COVID may have allowed people to be more open about their struggles with mental illness, there are still people who give them the cold shoulder and deny their problems, creating resentment between those struggling and those who aren't. Lack of awareness proved the second most reason why students did not utilize counseling even if needed. What Bradley can do to eliminate this problem is launch a campaign that will introduce students to the services provided and the professionals behind the scenes. A student committee like Active Minds would be an excellent initiator for this campaign. What exactly this campaign would entail could be a number of events. Bradley could also start introducing courses on mental health. "In addition to being able to recognize mental illness symptoms and raise awareness of treatment strategies, health educators should have the ability to teach cognitive-behavior primary prevention skills, communication skills, conflict resolution and coping skills" (Kleinfelder et al. 2).

### **Hire More Therapists**

All of the therapists I interviewed stated that Bradley's counseling center is currently understaffed and could stand to hire two or three more therapists for their team. Of the three solutions, this will probably be the most costly, but regardless, doing so will allow more students to be seen and help them find the right therapist for them. By the right therapist, I mean that students will find a therapist that meets their counseling needs in whichever form they may take and communicates regularly and effectively with them. Limitations still apply in this situation. On their website, the counseling center states that some issues will be addressed with professional referrals, especially in instances of chronic risk of harm to oneself or others or excessive no-shows.

### **Make Virtual Advancements**

Virtual advancements refer to apps and telehealth sessions. Implementing these strategies solves one of the main problems of being unable to seek mental health help late at night and on weekends. SNYU used an app called Thriving Campus to allow students 24/7 access to therapists. Bradley could easily have its students enroll in this app to start. From there, Bradley can create a special portal in order to hold more tele-counseling sessions for when students can't attend in person.

They can also show students journaling apps that help track their moods and provide daily affirmations. Reflectly and Breeze are examples of free apps that have developed personal journals with many unique features that record the user's mood and more. All of these things combined would drastically change the way students treat their mental health.

## **CONCLUSION**

Many solutions for updating Bradley's counseling center are available and absolutely beneficial to making what we have even better than it already is. By looking at examples from other college and university campuses, Bradley can match and even exceed its mental health services to that of higher standards than ever before.

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