FAQs for Mental Health Services from GME orientation

What are the hours for the mental health services?
Appointments are available as early as 8 am and last appointments are at 6 pm. The clinic is closed on weekends and holidays on which BCM is closed.

Do I have to disclose to the Texas medical board if I have ever used counseling or treatment for mental health disorders; how do I respond?
One uses their own discretion when reporting to the Medical Board. Most states ask the question in terms of ‘Does it impair your ability to take care of patients?’ If the answer to that is ‘No’ then you do not need to disclose. Read how the question is worded carefully and if you are still unsure, consult an attorney who specializes in medical board-related litigation. We see hundreds of clients, and we receive very few Medical Board inquiries. This suggests that clients we see do not meet these criteria which they need to report, or do not feel they need to disclose topics which they address in therapy. Therapy is very useful, and by and large the reasons for which trainees come in are not related to factors which the Medical Boards require they report.

How often do you get residents who approach you about depression and/or suicidal ideation?
Depression is very common. It needs to be addressed early so that symptoms do not worsen. While thoughts of suicide do occur, this is not extremely common in clients whom we see.

If I need the service, how do I take out the time from my schedule to attend?
Baylor college wide policy is to make counseling services available in the regular course of work hours. Contact your chief resident or program director to help make coverage arrangements to attend appointments during normal work hours. If you encounter difficulties, then you may contact the GME office for further assistance.

Are there after hours resources BCM provides?
Yes. Baylor offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to all trainees. The service is provided by a third party contracted by Baylor. The service is provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It offers emergency psychiatry services in Houston and outside of Houston. Up to 3 free sessions are available per year.

Can we arrange for a same day appointment for ourselves or a colleague?
Appointments are generally available within 2 weeks. If there is an urgent or emergent need, then you can utilize the Employee Assistance Program in the meantime.

How confidential are BCM’s services?
All provided services abide by the strictest rules of confidentiality. The service does not issue any report to administrative personnel within your department or any others at Baylor College
Will my records be accessible on the EMR by others?
No, the trainee records are protected and firewalled to deny access to anyone not involved in the individual’s care.

If I see a psychiatrist for psychopharmacology, does that count towards one of the 12 sessions per year?
Each individual is offered 12 sessions for psychopharmacology at no charge in addition to the 12 sessions for psychotherapy at no charge per academic year.

Residency/fellowship can be tough on a spouse or significant other. Are these sessions available for them?
Yes, the services are made available for significant others. They are permitted 12 sessions of psychotherapy at no charge per academic year.

Are sessions offered for couple’s therapy?
Yes, 12 sessions are offered at no charge per academic year for couple’s therapy.

So how many sessions total are available for no charge?
One individual has all of the following available each academic year:
- 12 sessions for individual psychotherapy
- 12 sessions for individual psychopharmacology
- 12 sessions for couple’s therapy
- 12 sessions for individual’s significant other

Where do we go for queer or gender counseling in Houston?
Legacy Community health centers offer expertise in caring for LGBTQ individuals.

What is the best resource for a burned out colleague?
If you identify a colleague who is experiencing burn out, then encourage them to seek help with our services. The Housestaff Mental Health Services can provide assistance and support. An individual does not need to have a clinical diagnosis to receive psychotherapy and counseling services.

If someone recognizes they are at high risk of suicide, will they be admitted to a psychiatric ward for days, voluntarily or involuntarily?
Patients who are actively suicidal (meaning they have a suicide plan, means to actualize the plan, and the intent to act on it imminently) need to be hospitalized for their own safety. Please remember that most acute suicidal thinking decreases once someone is engaged in treatment, but that can only happen if the person does not die by suicide. That is why we encourage people who are actively suicidal to go to the hospital voluntarily (meaning they go the emergency room on their own and request hospitalization). However, if the person is unwilling
to go on their own and are actively suicidal, the person can be involuntarily admitted, i.e., they are admitted ‘against their will’. There are legal consequences to each approach, one example being that if you are involuntarily admitted, your name goes on the mental illness registry that is checked when trying to purchase a gun.