



**RESOLUTION ON CAPS (COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES)
TRANSPARENCY AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE STANDARDS AT
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES**

*Respectfully submitted to the Board of Directors of California State University, Los Angeles,
Associated Students, Incorporated*

Submission Date: 09/10/20 Approval Date: TBD

Authored by: Diana Chavez (*ASI President*), Daniel Navasartian (MSW '20), Jocelyn Vargas (MSW '21), and Nicholas Cohen (MSW '21).

WHEREAS, The Associated Students, Incorporated (A.S.I.) is recognized as the official voice of the 26,390 students, tasked with expressing and protecting the rights and interests of all the students in the institution. A.S.I. is committed to overseeing administration at California State University, Los Angeles and tasked with ensuring the practice of shared governance and determining if the efforts and initiatives of campus administrators align with the needs and the interests of the student body.

WHEREAS, The Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Department within the Student Health Center at California State University, Los Angeles has the stated purpose to, in part to, “provide[s] confidential and non-judgmental help with your personal growth and psychological wellness. CAPS specializes in mental health services which can help you express thoughts and feelings, gain perspective, alleviate emotional symptoms, improve coping skills, and make healthy changes in your life”.¹

¹ “Counseling and Psychological Services.” Cal State LA, August 22, 2020.
<https://www.calstatela.edu/studenthealthcenter/caps>.



WHEREAS, As of September 18, 2020, CAPS employs 9 full-time and 2 part-time counseling staff (2 licensed psychologists, 6 LCSWs, 2 MFTs) that are tasked with providing mental health therapy to over 26,390 Cal State LA students.² The funding for CAPS services is paid for by the student health services fees, in addition to a portion of the student success fee.³

WHEREAS, This ratio of therapists to students places Cal State LA amongst the CSUs with the highest ratio of students to counselors as compared to all CSU campuses (as of 2017).⁴ Even with the stated plan to hire two additional CAPS therapists (using funding from the student success fee), this would still not meet the recommendation by the International Association of Counseling Services (IACS) of one counselor for every 1000-1500 students.⁵

WHEREAS, Due to a stated lack of therapists, CAPS has implemented a policy to triage the mental health treatment needs of students based on a confidential rubric.³ Students seeking one on one therapy are asked to share personal, confidential, and often traumatic experiences when requesting therapy. Students who do not meet the CAPS criteria for urgency are routinely referred to two mandatory group workshops before CAPS allows them to schedule therapy.³ This workshop's policy is not shared with students and not published on official marketing or

² "Meet the Staff." Cal State LA, August 24, 2020. <https://www.calstatela.edu/studenthealthcenter/caps/meet-staff>.

³ Fries, J., Personal communication to ASI Board of Directors, February 20, 2020. <https://asicalstatela.org/sites/default/files/content/minutes/2020/05/bodminutes02.20.2020certified.pdf>

⁴ CSU Mental Health Counselors, Fall 2017 Data, 2017. https://www.calfac.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/csu_mental_health_counselors_numbers_by_campus.pdf

⁵ "Staff to Student Ratios." International Accreditation of Counseling Services, October 16, 2019. <https://iacsinc.org/staff-to-student-ratios/>.



information material presented to students or staff, defying transparency.^{3,6} The specific criteria by which students receive therapy without mandatory workshops is not published due to a stated concern by CAPS leadership that students will “say things that wouldn’t be accurate” to receive timely therapy.³

WHEREAS, CAPS advertising and Cal State LA official communications can be perceived as deceiving when students are encouraged to attend one-on-one therapy only to be initially referred to CAPS workshops in most cases. Those seeking therapy at CAPS, will most likely disclose personal trauma during the initial assessment, and against their expectations, will be referred to public workshops as a prerequisite for obtaining a therapy appointment. Such an experience can dissuade students from seeking therapy in the future.

WHEREAS, CAPS has shared that the policies of the Cal State LA Police Department supersede the policies of CAPS in cases where a student is found to be a danger to self or others.³ CAPS does not currently have any LPS (Lanterman-Petris-Short)⁷ certified clinical staff. Therefore, the Cal State LA Police Department is called upon by CAPS to make the final determination on whether a student is a danger to self or others.

WHEREAS, The Cal State LA Police Department officers are currently not required to receive trauma-informed training to serve students in mental health crisis. While CAPS has shared that the “handcuffing” policy has recently changed³, the actual policy has not been shared publicly. Treatment and detainment by police officers that are

⁶ “Scheduling a CAPS Appointment.” Cal State LA, June 4, 2020.
<http://www.calstatela.edu/studenthealthcenter/caps/scheduling-caps-appointment>.

⁷ “Code Section.” Law section. Accessed September 19, 2020.
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=WIC.



not trauma-informed may be perceived as criminalization of mental health which stands against the university’s mission to reduce mental health stigma.¹

WHEREAS, Currently, the campus police are the only Cal State LA staff with an LPS privilege designation. There are no CAPS counselors who are LPS certified. An LPS certified mental health clinician has the authority to place students (or others) on involuntary holds due to being assessed as being a danger to themselves or others (e.g., a 5150 hold).

WHEREAS, Currently, the Covid19 Pandemic has required the implementation of telehealth as a substitution for in-person therapy. Per the Center for Disease Control (CDC), anxiety and depression rates have risen during the pandemic which increases the need for therapy.⁸

WHEREAS, Students receiving tele-therapy from CAPS must be in California due to laws regulating the license of the counselor that determines where a counselor can offer services⁹ which makes teletherapy inaccessible for out-of-state and international students who are still paying the required Student Health Center and Student Success Fees.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the ASI Board of Directors recommends that in an effort to increase the ability for students at Cal State LA to access mental health therapy, Cal State LA shall employ the requisite number of mental health counselors at CAPS to decrease the ratio of counselors to students to less than 1:1,500, per the IACS guideline⁵, *and*

⁸ “Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic - United States, June 24–30, 2020.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, August 13, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm>.

⁹ “Teletherapy.” Cal State LA, July 28, 2020. <https://www.calstatela.edu/studenthealthcenter/caps/teletherapy>.



THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that CAPS eliminate the requirement for students to attend any required workshops or other non-requested services in order to make an appointment for one on one therapy, either in-person or via - telehealth, *and*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, it is the stance of ASI that any CAPS policy that requires attendance of workshops or other prerequisites before receiving one-on-one therapy should be documented wherever CAPS therapy services are advertised.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that Cal State LA be transparent about CAPS therapy services. Specifically, the exact process by which students can receive CAPS therapy should be readily communicated online, *and*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that CAPS, consistent with its website, ensures that every therapy session constitutes the advertised 45 minutes duration for every student requesting therapy⁹, both in-person and via teletherapy, *and*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that Cal State LA publish (publicly) the “handcuffing”³ policy that the Cal State LA Police Department uses for students found to meet the legal criteria for danger to self or others, *and*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that students who are unable to receive therapy or teletherapy due to state laws about being out of state be offered a feasible and equitable opportunity to teletherapy deemed appropriate by CAPS, *and*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that Cal State LA maintain one Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) certified licensed counselor/social worker at CAPS to be on call during all CAPS hours of service, *and*



THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that Cal State LA direct CAPS leadership to evaluate and create a detailed plan for alternatives to calling the campus police when a student is in crisis, *and*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that each year Cal State LA shall conduct a two-day campus police training with CAPS counselors and all employed Cal State LA campus police officers on trauma-informed treatment of students in psychological crisis, including training in non-violent crisis intervention, and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that before any CalStateLA campus police officer is allowed to interact with students in mental health crisis at CAPS, a mental health knowledge and competency test must be administered by licensed clinical social workers and passed by each officer, *and*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that each Cal State LA Campus police officer wear a body-worn camera that is turned on when interacting with any students, staff, or community members, *and*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that CAPS publish, monthly, the: number of different students receiving therapy, number of total therapy sessions provided, number of student formal and informal grievances regarding CAPS services filed, starting 1/2/2021, and retroactively for the date period of 1/1/2020-12/31/20, *and*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI requests that CAPS post online the annual budget breakdown which includes the source of all CAPS funding, and the specific usage of such funding with as much detail as reasonably possible, *and*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that Cal State LA create a student led Mental Services Taskforce comprised of students, faculty, CAPS counselors, and ASI student board members, who make recommendations on the budget and



delivery of treatment services for CAPS, including facilitating an annual mental health townhall to document student feedback on CAPS services satisfaction and concerns as needed, *and*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, ASI recommends that Cal State LA shall implement such changes outlined herein by January 2, 2021. It is further resolved that Dr. Jennifer Miller, the CalStateLA Dean of Students and current direct supervisor of the CAPS Director, Dr. Joana Fries, shall create and publicly present a draft plan to ASI and the Academic Senate to implement these changes, including corrective action, and a specific written reply to each recommendation outlined, no later than December 1, 2020.

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution and supporting documentation be distributed widely, including, but not limited to, the Cal State LA Campus President William A. Covino, Provost Dr. José Luis Alvarado, Vice President for Student Life Nancy Wada-McKee, Associate Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students Jennifer Miller, Director of CAPS Jonna Fries, Director of Public Safety / Chief of Police Larry Bohannon, Vice President for Administration and Finance Lisa Chavez, Dean Pamela Scott- Johnson, Dean Ron Vogel, Dean Linda Essig, Dean Emily Allen, Dean Tye Jackson, Dean Cheryl Ney, Academic Senate Chair Talia Bettcher, and Chancellor Timothy White.



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