**MODEL POLICY**

**Guiding Principles**

1. State Center Community College District is committed to the success of all students, including those with depression or other mental health conditions.
2. State Center Community College District will:

• Acknowledge but not stigmatize mental health problems;

• Make suicide prevention a priority;

• Encourage students to seek help or treatment that they may need;

• Ensure that personal information is kept confidential;

• Allow students to continue their education as normally as possible by making reasonable accommodations; and

• Refrain from discrimination against students with mental illnesses, including punitive actions toward those in crisis.

**Mental Health Services**

3. Students are encouraged to seek intervention and mental health treatment through campus services or other available avenues.

4. Services are available on campus to support students with depression or other mental health conditions.

5. Crisis services are available to the Campus during regular Business hours.

6. Mental health treatment provided by State Center Community College District will be based on the student’s preferences, strengths and needs.

7. All services are provided on a voluntary basis and it remains the student’s decision whether or not to seek services.

8. State Center Community College District will refer a student to the appropriate office when it learns that:

• The student exhibits academic, behavioral or other difficulties that appear to be due to depression or another mental health condition, or

• The student has made a suicidal gesture or is known to have contemplated suicide***.9***

9. If a referred student does not seek on campus services the student will be encouraged to seek assistance with another community service provider.

 10. In the event a student is hospitalized, Health and Psychological Services, if requested by the student, will work with the student and the hospital as part of the hospital treatment team to, among other things, ensure appropriate aftercare planning.

**Confidentiality**

11. Mental health services are confidential. Health and Psychological Services will not share information about a student with faculty, staff, administrators or others unless the student consents.

12. The student, not State Center Community College District, is the client of the Health and Psychological Services.

13. As appropriate, the associated departments may encourage the student to consent to sharing information with the student’s family or others.

14. As permitted by law, Health and Psychological Services may disclose information about a student to the extent needed to protect the student or others from a serious and imminent threat to safety, for example, by making disclosures to crisis intervention or emergency personnel. Disclosures are permitted only if the student will not consent to interventions that will ameliorate the risk.***11***

15. When a student enrolls, and when a student becomes a client of Health and Psychological Services, the student will be asked whom, if anyone, the student wants contacted in case of a psychiatric emergency (*e.g*., family member, friend, clergy). The departments will retain this information within the student confidential record. Students will be encouraged to update this information.

**Accommodations**

16. State Center Community College District will reasonably accommodate students with depression or another mental health condition. Accommodations will be designed to enable the student to remain in school, meet academic standards and maintain normal social relationships.

17. The following accommodations will be provided if needed to enable a student to remain in or return to school, meet academic standards or maintain normal social relationships:

• Allowing the student to take a reduced course load or complete alternative assignments;

• Allowing the student to postpone assignments and exams;

• Allowing the student to work from home;

• Allowing the student to drop courses;

• Allowing the student to change roommates or rooms;

• Allowing guests to stay in the student’s room;

• Retrospective withdrawals from courses if academic difficulties were due to depression or another mental health condition.

18. Requests for accommodation would need to follow adopted district policy and procedures.

19. The Appropriate departments will help identify and secure needed accommodations, with the student’s consent.

20. Absences for treatment, including hospitalization, will be considered excused absences. Students will not automatically receive a failing grade or otherwise be sanctioned for missing classes due to depression or another mental health condition.

21. When a student takes a leave, the student will be permitted, for each class in which he/she is enrolled, to withdraw from the class or postpone assignments and exams.1***4***

22. The student need not have disclosed his/her condition prior to requesting an accommodation, including a leave of absence. State Center Community College District may not deny an accommodation on the ground that the student failed to previously disclose his/her condition.

**Leaves of Absence**

*Voluntary leave*

23. Students are permitted to take voluntary leaves of absence for mental health reasons.

24. If a student so requests, Health and Psychological Services will help the student decide whether to take a leave of absence and, as appropriate, help the student secure a leave.

25. A student on voluntary leave may maintain contact with, and may visit, campus to conduct business associated with their return to the college.

*Involuntary Leave*

26. In the uncommon circumstance that a student cannot safely remain at State Center Community College District or meet academic standards even with accommodations and other supports, State Center Community College District may require the student to take a leave of absence.

27. Decisions whether to impose an involuntary leave will be made by a committee that includes the Coordinators of Health and Psychological Services.

28. The committee may impose an involuntary leave for safety reasons if it finds, after an individualized assessment, that there is a significant risk that the student will harm him/herself or another, and that the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level through accommodations.15

29. In making its decision, the committee will:

• Consider whether there are accommodations that would allow the student to meet academic standards and remain safely in school, and

• If safety is an issue, consider the nature and severity of the risk, the probability that injury will actually occur, and whether accommodations can sufficiently mitigate the risk.

30. Before making its decision, the committee must:

• Notify the student that the committee is considering imposing an involuntary leave and the basis for the committee’s belief that the student may need to be placed on involuntary leave, and

• Provide the student and his/her representative the opportunity to appear personally before the committee and provide relevant information.

31. The committee may inquire into a student’s current condition, including requesting recent mental health information and records, but must confine its inquiry to information and records necessary to make a determination. The committee may not insist on unlimited access to confidential information or records.

32. If the committee imposes an involuntary leave because there is a significant risk that the student will harm another if he/she remains on campus, the committee may restrict the student’s interactions with the campus community during the period of the leave as needed to ensure safety. Such restrictions may include limits on the student’s communications with faculty, staff

*Refunds*

33. The same arrangements for refunds of tuition or other costs will be available to a student who takes a leave of absence for mental health reasons, whether voluntary or involuntary, as are available for a student who takes a leave of absence for physical health reasons.

*Returning from leave*

34. A student on leave, whether voluntary or involuntary, may request at any time to return to State Center Community College District as a student.

35. If State Center Community College District requires students on leave for medical reasons to demonstrate that they are fit to return, the college may require such a demonstration from a returning student on leave for mental health reasons. An opinion from the student’s treating mental health professional that the student is fit to return should, in most cases, be sufficient to allow the student to return. In exceptional cases, State Center Community College District may seek a second opinion.

36. In evaluating a student’s request to return, State Center Community College District will follow the process described in paragraphs 30-32. A student’s request to return may be denied only if the committee finds that the student will not be able, upon return, to meet academic standards or be safely at the school even with accommodations.

37. A student who desires to return to school after taking a leave of absence for mental health reasons will not be subject to more rigorous standards or procedures than a student who desires to return to school after taking a leave for physical health reasons.

**Alternative Housing While Enrolled**

38. In the uncommon circumstance that a student does not meet the standard for imposition of involuntary leave but cannot safely remain in State Center Community College District housing even with accommodations, State Center Community College District may require the student to live in housing other than State Center Community College District housing while enrolled.17

39. Decisions whether to require a student to leave State Center Community College District housing will be made by the committee identified in paragraph 28 according to the process described in paragraphs 30-32.

40. The committee may, in addition, restrict the student’s entering State Center Community College District housing – for example, to visit friends — as needed to prevent a significant risk that the student will harm himself or others.

41. The student may continue to attend classes, extracurricular activities and campus events; maintain normal contact with teaching, administrative and other staff; and otherwise visit friends on campus.

**Disciplinary Action**

42. Disciplinary action will not be used as a pretext for discrimination.18

43. Self-injurious behavior will not be addressed through the disciplinary system. State Center Community College District will not bring disciplinary action against a student for suicide attempts, suicidal thoughts, or self-injury, including self-cutting.

44. Students charged with offenses will be afforded the following accommodations:

* If the student takes a voluntary leave for mental health reasons, disciplinary proceedings will be stayed until the student returns.
* If State Center Community College District is considering whether to require the student to take an involuntary leave or to leave State Center Community College District housing, disciplinary proceedings will be stayed while the decision is being made.
* If a student is placed on involuntary leave, the stay will continue until the student returns.
* If the student is required to leave State Center Community College District housing, the stay will continue until that restriction is lifted.

45. Disciplinary action should be avoided, and disciplinary sentences mitigated, when the offense was the product of depression or other mental health condition. This is especially true when, as a result of treatment or other interventions, the student is likely to comply with the code of conduct in the future.

**Education and Training**

46. State Center Community College District provides education and training so that students, resident advisors, campus police, and teaching, administrative and other staff:

• Are familiar with signs of mental illness, depression, self harm and suicide risk,

• Understand – and know how to access – the range of supports available to students, including support groups, Mental Health services and accommodations,

• Know what emergency procedures to follow in a crisis.

47. Information about mental health issues and services and the disability services center is provided at student and parent orientations.