Combining Career and Mental Health Counseling:
Integrating Theory & Practice

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Some key questions/issues to consider:

For educational and related settings

Mission/Purpose
1. What is the career center's unique mission?
2. How are the center's services distinct from other counseling services? How do they overlap, if at all?
3. Nature of collaborative arrangements (if any) between student services units involved in the provision of these services?
4. Views of higher level administrators regarding how career and mental health counseling services are provided?
5. What political "turf wars" might come into play around the provision of these services?

Facilities
1. How will facilities be designed/accommodated to provide services?
2. Does the space provide for videotaping, supervisor observation?
3. Will students (or community clients) seeking counseling be waiting in the same area as individuals needing a resume critique?

Service Delivery
1. To what extent do intake procedures "screen" for mental health issues?
2. How is readiness for various types of services assessed?
3. How are career and mental health issues reflected in the theories and models that guide practice in the setting?
4. To what extent is the mental health aspect of a career services unit promoted to target audiences? For example, career services may want to avoid appearing too "clinical."

Records
1. Record keeping/confidentiality—Types of records, forms (e.g., confidentiality agreement, release of information, no-suicide contract, etc.) needed when services are offered that combine career and mental issues. Would different kinds of records be needed for mental health versus career counseling, or the same for both? Attention to HIPAA?

Assessments/Resources
1. Kinds of materials and assessments needed in a center providing career and mental health services.
2. Beyond standard career assessments/inventories, will career assessments be used that incorporate mental health issues (e.g., CTI, MVS)?
3. To what extent are more "clinical" assessments used, e.g., BDI, MMPI, NEO?
4. What types of forms are maintained e.g., suicide contract, confidentiality agreement, release of information?

Staffing, supervision & training.
1. Do staff have professional identities in psychology, mental health counseling, professional counseling, social work, other fields, or all of the above? Are these identities compatible or reconcilable?
2. How will accrediting agencies view the staffing patterns in organizations that combine career and mental health counseling?
3. Use of student paraprofessionals--is there a role for such staff in career centers that include mental health counseling services?
4. Is professional development and training provided in both mental health and career counseling for all staff and all graduate students? Do career staff supervise mental health personnel, and vice versa?
5. Do such staff have all the credentials, e.g., licensure, certification, to supervise all staff?

6. Are staff properly insured, credentialed, and prepared to provide services in both areas and where they overlap? Or if a career services program opts to integrate mental health and career counseling, is the pattern for some staff to be proficient in both areas and other staff to proficient in only one?
7. What are the costs to providing expanded delivery, e.g., licensed professionals, consulting, continuing education, facilities, accreditation, professional memberships, insurance?

For persons in private practice

1. To what extent would a practitioner need to check with others in the practice setting about merging career and mental health counseling?
2. To what extent might facilities or space need to be changed if combined counseling is offered?
3. Will the inventory of tests and assessment materials need to be changed?
4. Is there money in the budget for assessments for both career and mental health?
5. Will clients be charged for these additional assessments and if so, how much?
6. Will more time and effort need to be invested in in-service training to provide comprehensive counseling services?
7. Do practitioners have all the needed credentials and certificates to provide comprehensive services?
8. Is the scope of service of the practice clearly defined?
9. Are there consultative services available?
10. Has a crisis or emergency plan been established?
11. In a group practice, can discussion of the integration of career and mental health issues be included in case consultation?
12. Will more time and effort need to be invested in professional development and training to provide comprehensive counseling services?
13. Do practitioners have all the needed credentials and certificates to provide comprehensive services?
14. Has an appropriate referral base/network been established?
15. Will client forms need to be revised?
16. Does malpractice insurance cover integrated services?
17. Are practitioners comfortable working collaboratively with other providers, e.g. social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and physicians?

Sources of Additional Information

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