

Frequently Asked Questions about Mental Health Services at IMSA

1. What can counselors help me with?

IMSA counselors can talk to you about anything that it is on your mind. We help students who are struggling with academics, problems at home, problems in relationships, feelings of depression or anxiety, or really any question or concern that you have that you might want to discuss with another person. If we feel that your issues are too severe to be supported only with on-campus services, we will share with you options for off-campus treatment. Anything you share with IMSA counselors is kept confidential unless we are concerned for your or another person's safety or if you reveal current or past child abuse to us.

2. When can I visit IMSA counselors?

IMSA counselors are available to meet with you between 7:30am and 4:30pm Monday through Friday. Your RC's can also contact us 24/7 if you are having an emergency and need to speak with one of us immediately.

3. Can I tell the counselors that I've broken school policies? What is confidential?

You can read about your rights to confidentiality when speaking to IMSA counselors on pg. 25 of the IMSA handbook. In general, anything you share with an IMSA counselor is kept confidential unless we are concerned about your safety, the safety of someone else or you report current or past child abuse to us. If you are unsure if something you or a friend is thinking or experiencing will be kept confidential, feel free to ask us first.

4. When would counselors contact my parents? Do I have a say in what they find out?

IMSA counselors will contact a student's parents if we are concerned for that student's safety. If this needs to happen, we will let you know first and will explain the process to you. Usually this comes up if a student is having suicidal thoughts or has engaged in behavior that the counselor has deemed to be unsafe. IMSA counselors may call parents to recommend outside services be put in place or, in the case of an emergency situation, we will have the student's parents take them to have an immediate evaluation at a hospital to ensure the student will receive the proper level of care to keep him or her safe. Otherwise, what you share with IMSA counselors is kept confidential according to the guidelines on pg. 25 of the IMSA handbook.

5. What are behavioral contracts?

When students receive an outside evaluation to determine their safety and need for care, before they return to campus we will have a meeting with the student, their parents, the IMSA counselor, the student's RC and the Director of Student Affairs. At this meeting we will talk about the recommendations from the evaluation, what the parent and student believe is in the student's best interest as well as what IMSA staff believe is in the

student's best interest. If we all agree that it is best to have the student return to IMSA the counselor will create an agreement for all parties to sign that details the treatment recommendations from the evaluation as well as any additional considerations that the student, parent and IMSA staff believe to be necessary for the student to be healthy and well while back at IMSA. If the student is unable to follow the agreement developed at the meeting, all parties will meet again to determine if it is still in the student's best interest to remain at IMSA.

6. Can someone be kicked out of the academy for mental illness? Why?

Reasonable efforts are always made to accommodate the emotional and learning differences of a student in the least restrictive environment. In other words, if the student is feeling depressed, there may be things that can be done on campus and in the classroom before considering a more restrictive environment like an outpatient treatment program or an inpatient hospital stay. If a student's emotional or learning differences cannot be reasonably accommodated, or the student clearly needs a more restrictive level of care, meetings are held with the student, parents, IMSA counselors and any outside treatment professionals to determine what resources outside of IMSA need to be put into place. And yes, in some cases it may not be in the student's best interest to remain at IMSA. These decisions are usually made in conjunction with the student, the counselors, parents and the Director of Student Affairs. It is true that sometimes a student or their parents may not agree with the decision to withdraw their son or daughter from the academy. While every effort is made to keep the student at IMSA, it sometimes becomes clear that this is not the best environment for him/her. The reason for this is almost always with regard to the student's ability to function safely and independently in both the academic and residential components of the academy. The final decision regarding this rests with the Director of Student Affairs.

7. What do I do if counseling or talking to my RC is not helping me?

Try to figure out what is not working. Are you connecting with the counselor or RC and are they suggesting things that are helpful? If not, you can try talking to a different counselor or another RC, teacher, or staff member you might feel more comfortable with. Are you taking their advice or suggestions? Trying out new things takes both practice and time. Change does not come overnight and can take a fair amount of effort. If these things are still not helpful it may be that you need a more structured level of care than IMSA can provide. In such a case, every effort would be made to help the student find an appropriate off-campus referral.

8. What do I do if a friend comes to me and does not want help?

Friends have the right to refuse help or to take your suggestions but not put them into practice. Sometimes a friend just feels better sharing what is going on and is not really looking for any "help". Listening can go a long way in making someone feel better. You can also go with your friend to one of the counselors or the RC, which helps them feel

less anxious and more supported. If you continue to be encouraging, supportive and persistent and your friend still refuses help, it would be good for you to talk with someone about how you are feeling. It can be painful to watch someone go through something and not accept the help that is being offered. Finally, if you feel your friend is in any sort of danger to themselves or others, you may *have* to tell someone so that we can find the appropriate resource for them. Go to your RC or one of the counselors to ask for advice on how to handle the situation.

9. How do I find my RC if they're not in the office?

If it is during the day, you can find the day-hall monitor or come to the Student Life office for assistance. If it is in the evening, there is always an RC or AC on-call that you can talk with. If your RC is not in the office, you can knock on their apartment door if they are scheduled to work that day. If they are not scheduled to work, they may not be on campus that day. You can also call them on their phone. The numbers are posted in each wing and outside the RC office for RC's that are available that day or evening. Finally, you could email your RC and ask to set up a time to meet.

10. What are RSL mediators? What conflicts can I approach them with?

Each wing has two Residential Student Leaders (RSL's). Most of them have been trained in the basic peer mediation process and can be approached for anything that involves a conflict with a peer. Having a conflict with another person that you cannot resolve on your own is a good reason to seek out mediation. Anything you define as a "conflict" with a peer might be helped by mediation. The RSL can help you determine if the conflict is outside their area of expertise and may need to be handled by an RC or one of the counselors. Your RSL can also help you set up a meeting with a mediator that is not in your wing. Usually, having an RSL mediator that you do not know introduces more objectivity into the conflict resolution process.