

# Imagining Disability Futures: CAPS Therapy Services

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**COUNSELING AND  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

# Introduction to the Project

Our project focuses on CAPS therapy services at the University of Michigan. We have assessed direct student experiences and opinions on the services provided by CAPS through various online sources as well as an anonymous survey capturing direct student perspectives.

After a comprehensive review and presentation of these experiences, we have created an infographic that imagines the future of CAPS. Our goal is to highlight ways in which CAPS can create a more accessible system to allow all students to access adequate mental health services at the University of Michigan.

## Overview of CAPS

According to the University Health and Counseling website, CAPS provides an array of clinical, preventative, and training services. These services include but are not limited to the following:

- Clinical Services
- Crisis Services
- Consultations
- Care management
- DEI Training
- Outreach and Community Engagement

## Limitations

CAPS utilizes a short-term model for counseling for only currently enrolled, eligible students

If the student presents with needs that are beyond the scope of what CAPS is able to provide, they may need to be referred to a long-term provider outside of the University. This may be limiting for students with various financial concerns

**Student Perspectives on CAPS Part 1:**

**Insights From**

**The Michigan Daily**

# “What CAPS Gets Wrong” by Jared Dougall (Jan 2022)

## Long waiting times:

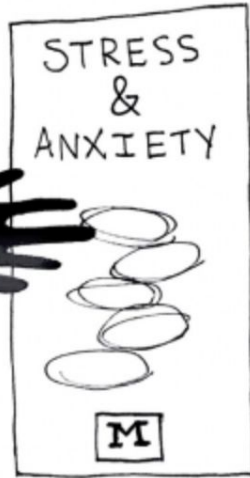
- 2 weeks to get a consultation
- 1 month after consultation - first appointment

## Encouraged to seek care elsewhere:

- Mental health concerns of the average student not considered important enough for longer term care

“If we want to live up to the claim of being the “Leaders and the Best,” we need actual **comprehensive counseling and psychological services** — not a crappy crisis hotline with a month-long wait.”

# THANKS CAPS!



"you seem to be struggling, but here's a helpful pamphlet!"



HANNAH MYERS

**"Thanks CAPS!"**

**By Hannah Myers**

**October 1, 2018**

“From The Daily: UMich should consider expanding long-term counseling through CAPS” by The Michigan Daily Editorial Board, October 2021

“The CAPS waiting list usually grows during high-stress times, meaning students can’t access help when they need it most”

“While short-term care is beneficial for some students, many students have chronic stress that cannot be resolved in 4 to 8 weeks”

Reported time spent with CAPS according to a CAPS counselor:

1-5 sessions - 81.1%

5+ sessions - 18.9%

21+ sessions - 0.7%



**“CAPS delivers open letter to vice president of student life; cites turnover crisis, lack of competitive salary” by Riley Hodder and Miles Anderson, February 2023**

**CAPS staff penned an open letter to administration about a “turnover crisis” within CAPS staff, including CAPS therapists**

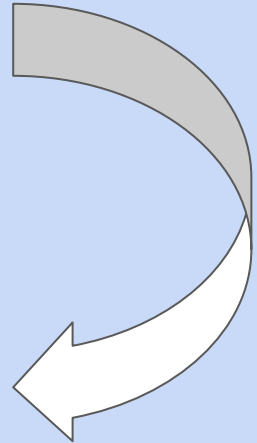
**Why?**

**Lack of competitive salary for CAPS employees**

**Employees find work at other institutions which offer higher salaries**

**Lack of quality mental health care for students at the University of Michigan**

**Shortage of CAPS therapists to evaluate and treat students**





**Student Perspectives on CAPS Part 2:  
Insights from **

# Highlighting Student Perspectives from Reddit

**Post question:** “Has anyone actually gotten useful help from CAPS or are they just a performative stunt by the university so they can say they have mental health support for students?”

## **Some replies:**

- “Yes, they helped me work on some immediate concerns and set me up with a long term care provider”
- “My CAPS counselor was wonderful and got me through a really tough time.”
- “Very helpful in my opinion and gave me good resources to continue seeking help after the school year.”
- “I do think it's disappointing that CAPS makes it difficult to have an initial appointment and provide overall care to students”
- “They honestly made my situation MUCH worse. I started with anxiety and left with anxiety times a hundred, several thousand in debt, and half a semester of missed work.”
- “I think it was helpful for me for emergency stressful events to talk to a counselor.”

It is important to note here that this post was made 3 years ago

# Assessment of Reddit Perspectives

## Problems highlighted:

- Issues with the length of time it takes to fill out the form to get an initial appointment. One user said that it took them about 35 minutes. Someone who is in crisis may find this to be too much and divert them away from the resource as a whole
- One commenter said that CAPS left them with more anxiety and didn't feel the counselors helped their specific situation nor did they feel they were a priority
- Although there are a lot of issues expressed by those who left comments, it is also important to note that some people made the assertion that CAPS was very helpful to their situation and felt as if the resource saved their life. This highlights the complexities within mental health services because different therapy types work differently for different individuals

## Potential solutions:

- Expedite the process for completing forms to ensure those in crisis are not deterred from seeking help
- Hire more CAPS counsellors to decrease wait times as well as increase the likelihood that each student will have someone who shares similar identities

## **Part 3: Survey on student experiences**

# Q1: Was CAPS able to met your needs in a timely manner?

## Crip time:

Conflicts between crip time and normative time...bureaucratic obstacles create uncertainty around time for appointments, intake, etc. as illness persists.

## Long wait times:

“Took extremely long to get an initial consultation appointment...I wanted to start weekly session for a few weeks to see if I liked therapy, but scheduling would not work with me.”

## Showing up:

“My intake went great, however, for an appointment scheduled after that, I waited over an hour and the person never showed up. This same thing happened with a different staff member for my friend.”

## Q2: Would you say that CAPS adequately met your mental health needs?

### Professionalism:

“The therapist diagnosed me with a disorder (which they cannot do they are not a doctor) [and] laughed at my situation and concerns. Extremely unprofessional.”

### Qualifications:

“I received contact information for five mental healthcare providers. Out of them, two never responded. One of them said they ‘don't have the capacity to take on any clients with trauma.’”

### Financial Accessibility:

“The other [provider] responded to my request that they did not accept my insurance, asking me to \*write clerical emails on their behalf\* to a variety university staff.”

**Q3: What improvements would you suggest to make CAPS a better resource for students?**

**“Allow for meetings past 4 times.”**

**“Their staff feel more like counselors than therapists.”**

**“Actually showing up.”**

# **Part 4: Imagining the future of CAPS: Infographic**



# Imagining the Future of CAPS:

So... now what?



# References

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