

# The Student who has Disordered Eating

## Facts about disordered eating:

Eating disorders are not necessarily about food, but food is the substance that people with eating disorders abuse. Eating disorders have both physical and psychological symptoms. They are characterized by problematic attitudes and feelings about food, weight and body shape, a disruption in eating behaviors and weight management, and intense anxiety about body weight and size.

Eating disorders usually refers to Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, and/or Binge Eating Behavior.

- Anorexia Nervosa is characterized by restricted eating, self-starvation and excessive weight loss.
- Bulimia Nervosa is characterized by recurrent episodes of overeating large amounts of food in a short period of time (the binge) followed by some form of purging.
- Binge Eating Disorder is characterized by recurrent episodes of binge eating that are not followed by inappropriate compensatory behaviors (purging) to prevent weight gain.

## What to Do

- Speak to the student in private.
- Be supportive and express concern for the student's health and well-being.
- Identify specific behaviors or symptoms that are of concern. ("I've noticed that you've stopped eating lunch and talk about needing to lose more weight.")
- Refer the student to University Health Services' Counseling and Consultation Services (608-265-5600 – option 9) located in 333 East Campus Mall.

## Avoid

- Focusing on weight rather than health and effective functioning.
- Judging the student's behaviors or labeling them ("self-destructive").
- Recommending solutions such as "accept yourself" or "just eat healthy".
- Commenting on student's weight loss, as you may be inadvertently encouraging unhealthy behaviors.
- Getting into a battle of wills with the student. If the student is resisting your efforts, restate your concerns and leave the door open for further contact. If you think the situation is urgent, consult a professional in University Health Services' Counseling and Consultation Services (608-265-5600 – option 9).