

# HELPING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS:

## Faculty and Staff Resource Guide

### Students in Distress

The Division of Student Affairs has developed this informational guide to aid faculty and staff in assisting students experiencing difficulties.

- **In an emergency, and safety is an immediate concern, call 911.**
- For non-emergency safety concerns call UFPD at 352-392-1111.
- The Counseling & Wellness Center and Dean of Students Office are available for consultation. The Behavioral Consultation Team, chaired by the Dean of Students, can facilitate campus efforts to assist the student and provide support for faculty/staff.

*If in doubt, call the UF Police Department.*

- All numbers below are available 24 hours a day unless otherwise indicated.

<b>Emergency</b>	<b>911</b>
UF Police Department	352-392-1111
Dean of Students Office*	352-392-1261
Counseling & Wellness Center	352-392-1575
Student Health Care Center	352-392-1161
Office of Victim Services*	352-392-5648
Housing & Residence Education*	352-392-2161

\*After office hours, call 352-392-1111 and request the on-call staff person for the office you are calling.

For persons with print-related disabilities, this publication is available upon request in alternative formats. For more information contact the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs at 352.392.1265, 711 (TTY), (155 Tigert Hall.)

### Dangerous Student

Safety is an immediate concern; Verbal or physical threats to harm others; Active threats of suicide and resists help.

If Student is Dangerous or Threatening Harm to Self or Others

**Call 911**

### Disruptive or Disturbing Student

Safety is not an immediate concern; Threatens harm to self or others, but will accept help; Demonstrates bizarre behavior or communication; Disruptive to the living/learning environment

For Mental Health Consultation or Referral

Counseling & Wellness Center  
352-392-1575

After Office Hours  
352-392-1575

For Student Affairs Consultation

Dean of Students Office  
352-392-1261

After Office Hours  
Request On Call Staff  
352-392-1111

### Troubled Student

A student who is troubled, confused, very sad, highly anxious, irritable, lacks motivation and/or concentration; has thoughts about not wanting to live; difficulties in interactions with others.

For Mental Health Consultation or Referral

Counseling & Wellness Center  
352-392-1575

After Office Hours  
352-392-1575

For Student Affairs Consultation

Dean of Students Office  
352-392-1261

After Office Hours  
Request On Call Staff  
352-392-1111

For Academic Concerns  
Department Chair  
or  
Program Coordinator  
or  
Associate Dean of College

# Disruptive or Disturbing Student FAQ

## Q. What are warning signs of disruptive student behavior?

Disruptive or disturbing students exhibit behaviors that signify an obvious crisis and necessitate more immediate intervention. Examples include:

- Highly disruptive behavior (e.g. verbal hostility, aggression, disregard for classroom decorum and expected conduct, etc.); failure to comply with corrective feedback
- Inability to communicate clearly (garbled, pressured speech; disorganized, confused, or rambling thoughts)
- Loss of contact with reality (seeing or hearing things which others cannot see or hear; irrational beliefs or fears that others may be conspiring against them)
- Stalking behaviors and inappropriate communications (including threatening letters, e-mail messages, harassment)
- Suicidal thoughts and/or threats to harm others (may be communicated orally or in written formats through e-mail, assignments, or on social network or academic sites)

## Q. How should I respond to a disruptive or disturbing student?

- If immediate safety is a concern or the person acts in a highly irrational or disruptive way, **call 911**
- If safety is not a concern, attempt to deescalate the situation; offer to find someone to assist in problem-solving; meet and work on a solution
- Talk with your supervisor for additional assistance
- Consult with the Counseling and Wellness Center or UFPD
- Notify the Dean of Students Office

## Q. How can I recognize and help the person who has thoughts about not wanting to live?

Faculty and staff sometimes find themselves talking to someone who appears to be very sad, hopeless and in despair. If the person's conversation or behaviors suggest suicide may be a concern, here are some suggestions for how to help:

- Listen and allow time to understand the scope of his or her concerns
- Ask the question – Based on what you are saying about how things are for you, I am wondering... Are you thinking about not wanting to live? Are you thinking about killing yourself?
- Be persistent; if after further conversation you are still concerned, ask again
- Offer hope and promote the idea of getting help
- Refer to campus and community mental health resources: Counseling and Wellness Center (352-392-1575) or Alachua County Crisis Center (352-264-6789)
- For emergency appointments during Counseling and Wellness Center office hours, offer to walk the student to the Crisis Emergency Resource Center, on the 4th floor of Peabody Hall, or call 352-392-1575 and ask for emergency consultation.
- Consult with the Counseling and Wellness Center for additional support
- Notify the Dean of Students Office
- Consult with your supervisor for potential resources

# Troubled Student FAQ

## Q. What are some signs a student may be troubled?

Students in distress may not be disruptive to others, but may exhibit behaviors which indicate something is problematic. They may also be reluctant or unable to acknowledge a need for personal help. Behaviors may include:

- Marked changes in academic performance
- Tardiness and excessive absences inconsistent with prior history
- Withdrawal and/or avoidance from participation, increased anxiety around exams or deadlines, difficulty working in teams
- Changes in emotional states, e.g., sadness, crying, lethargy, irritability, rapid speech, preoccupied, increased and more intense disagreement with peers and instructor, sense of confusion
- Changes in physical well-being, e.g. swollen eyes from crying, increased illnesses, poor self-hygiene, rapid weight loss/gain, sleeping in class
- Repeated requests for special consideration, e.g., deadline extensions, changes in requirements, grade changes
- Behaviors which may interfere with effective management of the learning environment, e.g., outbursts of anger, domination of discussion, derailing the focus of discourse
- Communication in either oral, written, or electronic formats that may suggest a threat to one's self or others

## Q. How should I respond to a student that is troubled?

For students who are mildly or moderately troubled:

- Address the situation on an individual level; consider having someone meet with you and student
- Consult with the Counseling and Wellness Center and/or Dean of Students Office for assistance
- Avoid offering confidentiality to the student should s/he wish to talk
- Deal directly with the behavior according to classroom protocol; provide corrective feedback and offer to help
- Encourage the student to use campus and community helping resources; offer to walk the student to assistance or call and make an appointment
- Inform and consult with your supervisor

## Q. How do I make a referral?

Your exposure to students increases the likelihood you will identify signs of distress in a student. What can you do?

- Recommend campus services to the student. Remind the student campus counseling services are confidential
- Reassure the student it is an act of strength to seek help
- Offer to help make the initial contact with the helping resource
- If the student rejects referral, consult with the Counseling & Wellness Center or the Dean of Students Office

# POLICY AND PROCEDURE INFORMATION

## Behavioral Consultation Team

The UF Behavioral Consultation Team (BCT) takes a coordinated and educational approach to assessment and intervention with students who are in significant distress, especially those who may be of harm to self, others, or their behavior is significantly impacting the community in a detrimental way.

The BCT consists of a variety of campus experts in areas related to student behavior including the Dean of Students Office, the Counseling and Wellness Center, Housing and Residence Education, and the UF Police Department.

Team members meet every week or upon demand if the situation warrants it. The BCT is cross-functional, reinforces an institutional “ethic of care,” balances the well being of the individual with the safety of the community, is responsive and proactive, and promotes campus wide access to helping resources. For further information, contact the Dean of Students at 352-392-1261.

## Student Conduct Code

The Student Conduct Code outlines the standards and expectations for students’ conduct and behavior at the University of Florida. Areas include: conduct disruptive to the university community, causing physical or other harm to any person, sexual assault and sexual misconduct, and harassment.

For more information, see the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution Web site <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/> or call 352-392-1261x207.

## Sexual Assault

UF is committed to maintaining an environment free from sexual harassment. Sexual assault (also known as sexual battery or rape) is a criminal form of sexual harassment. See <http://www.ufsa.ufl.edu/students/sh/sexualharassment.shtml>.

The sexual assault of a student should be reported directly to the UF Police Department (352-392-1111). All UF employees have the obligation to report knowledge of student sexual assault. This obligation includes student employees when acting in a supervisory capacity in the performance of their duties (e.g., Teaching Assistants, Graduate Assistants, Resident Assistants, and Preview staff).

For services available to a student who has been sexually assaulted, contact the Office of Victim Services (352-395-5648).

## Disabilities Resource Center

UF provides direct support services to students with all types of disabilities. Students with disabilities are required to register with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) if they are requesting accommodations. Faculty and staff can contact the DRC to discuss accommodation requests or general questions for any student in their class seeking accommodations. Call 352-392-8565 or see <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>.

## Class Attendance

The university recognizes the right of the individual professor to make attendance mandatory. After due warning, a professor can prohibit further attendance and subsequently assign a failing grade for excessive absences. Clearly communicate your attendance policy in your course syllabus. Absences count from the first class meeting. In general, acceptable reasons for absence from class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays and participation in official university activities such as music performances, student government obligations, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. Other reasons also may be approved. Students may be required to provide appropriate documentation to support their absences. However, an excused absence from class does not excuse a student from fulfilling class requirements.

Faculty may have to manage a disruptive or disturbing student in the classroom. After a warning, the student may be asked to leave the classroom due to behavior that infringes on the rights of the faculty member to teach and other students to learn. The faculty member should document the behavior and forward that documentation to the department chair and Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (using the on-line incident report at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/webforms/incidentreport.php>).

## Notification Letter from the Dean of Students Office

Students that experience a family or personal emergency (death in the family, unplanned hospitalization, etc.) may contact the Dean of Students Office and request notification letters be sent to their professors. Letters will be sent if the situation will result in the student being absent for three or more days. Students are required to provide faculty members with appropriate documentation to support their absence unless, due to the nature of the issue, the information is provided to and verified by the Dean of Students Office.

## Student Death Notification

In the event of the death of a currently enrolled student, an official notification of Student Death will be issued by the Dean of Students Office. Records pertaining to this student will be restricted by the Office of the University Registrar and no grade will be submitted for the student.

Faculty or staff members receiving information that a currently enrolled student has died are asked to contact the Dean of Students Office (352-392-1261). The Dean of Students Office will verify such reports with appropriate officials and issue official notifications to the campus community; and can provide support services to faculty, staff and students.

## Illness Policy

Students absent from classes or examinations because of illness should contact their professors. The Student Health Care Center will only write excuse notes for illnesses or injuries that have resulted, or will result, in absence of three or more days of class. Any shorter term absences will not receive notes. If an instructor requires a note for an absence of fewer than three days, one can be obtained upon the instructor’s written request using official UF letterhead. For information about voluntary and involuntary medical withdrawals, contact the Dean of Students Office at 352-392-1261.