

Your Role as a Faculty

Faculty are often the first to identify distressed students. Your care, concern, and assistance will often be enough to help the student. At other times, you can play a critical role in helping the student connect to campus resources. The information in this brochure will assist you in providing appropriate support and making effective referrals.

Signs of Distress

The following signs may indicate that a student is distressed. It can be helpful to look at a cluster of indicators:

Problems in Academic Performance

- Dramatic drop in grades
- Excessive absences or tardiness, especially if this is a change from previous functioning

Unusual Behavior

- Marked isolation and unwillingness to communicate
- Extreme mood changes or excessive, inappropriate displays of emotions

Traumatic Changes in Relationships

- Death of a family member or close friend
- Difficulties with intimate partners, family members, or roommates

Substance Abuse

- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Pattern of reliance or habitual use of drugs, legal or illegal

References to Suicide or Homicide

- Statements indicating feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- Overt references to suicide and/or homicidal threats

References to Suicide & Homicide

If a distressed student makes a reference to SUICIDE/HOMICIDE, which includes the HOW, WHEN, WHERE, or other specific information then an immediate response is required.

- To reach the on-call counselor during daytime hours, call 401-254-3124. **Indicate the situation needs an immediate response and ask the receptionist to interrupt the counselor.**
- After hours or weekends, call Public Safety (401-254-HELP) and they will appropriately assist your concern. If a counselor needs to be reached, Public Safety will assist you in the process.

Use Your Feelings as a Guide to Refer

You may find yourself reacting to the distressed student. If any of the following occur, considering referring the student to the counseling center:

- The advising relationship is demanding too much of your time or energy.
- You find yourself dealing with strong emotions towards the student.
- You are caught up in keeping secrets that make you uncomfortable.
- You *feel* like you are in over your head.

Responding to Distressed Students

The following are helpful guidelines when responding to distressed students:

- Recognize strange, unusual, or inappropriate behavior. Early feedback, intervention, and referral can prevent more serious problems.
- Be specific and direct when exploring your concerns.
- Listen to the student by concentrating on his/her feelings and thoughts.
- Express in a direct, yet concerned manner a recommendation for additional support, such as meeting with a counselor.
- If the student agrees to the referral, with the student present, call the Counseling Center to make an appointment.
- If the student is not ready to schedule an appointment, encourage seeking help and provide information about the Counseling Center.
- Indicate your concern for the student's wellness by following-up with the student at a later date.

Reminders

- ◆ If you feel threatened or uneasy do not meet with the student alone and seek consultation from a Staff and/or Faculty as needed.
- ◆ Use your resources. You are not expected to provide counseling or make decisions alone.
- ◆ Respond to distressing work because early intervention and referral can prevent more serious problems.

Emergencies

- ◆ To reach the on-call counselor during daytime hours, call 401-254-3124. **If the situation calls for immediate response ask the receptionist to interrupt the counselor.**
- ◆ After hours or weekends, call Public Safety (401-254-HELP) and they will appropriately assist your concern. If a counselor needs to be reached, Public Safety will assist you in the process.

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Helping Distressed Students: A Guide for Faculty/Staff

Roger Williams University

*Center for Counseling
and
Student Development*