



SUPERVISOR TIPS



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RECOGNIZING COLLEAGUES OR STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

As a faculty or staff member, you may be the first to notice signs of distress in a student or employee. Often, there are indicators that an individual is experiencing distress long before it escalates to a crisis. The presence of one of the following indicators alone does not necessarily mean severe distress but the more indicators and the more individuals who notice something amiss, the more likely it is that an individual needs help.

ACADEMIC INDICATORS

- ◆ Repeated absences from class, section, or lab
- ◆ Missed assignments, exams or appointments
- ◆ Deterioration in quality or quantity of work
- ◆ Extreme disorganization or erratic performance
- ◆ Written or artistic expression of unusual violence, morbidity, social isolation, despair, or confusion; essays or papers that focus on suicide or death
- ◆ Continual seeking of special provisions (extensions on papers, make-up exams)
- ◆ Patterns of perfectionism: e.g., can't accept themselves if they don't receive an A
- ◆ Overblown or disproportionate response to grades or other evaluations

BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL INDICATORS

- ◆ Direct statements indicating distress, family problems or loss
- ◆ Angry or hostile outbursts, yelling, or aggressive comments
- ◆ More withdrawn or more animated than usual
- ◆ Expressions of hopelessness or worthlessness; crying or tearfulness
- ◆ Expressions of severe anxiety or irritability
- ◆ Excessively demanding or dependent behavior
- ◆ Lack of response to outreach from staff
- ◆ Shakiness, tremors, fidgeting or pacing
- ◆ Statements involving harm to self or others
- ◆ Obsessed with weapons

PHYSICAL INDICATORS

- ◆ Deterioration in physical appearance or personal hygiene
- ◆ Excessive fatigue, exhaustion; falling asleep in class repeatedly
- ◆ Visible changes in weight; statements about change in appetite or sleep
- ◆ Frequent or chronic illness
- ◆ Disorganized speech, rapid or slurred speech, confusion
- ◆ Unusual ability to make eye contact
- ◆ Evidence of self-harm, e.g., cutting
- ◆ Coming to class or work bleary-eyed or smelling of alcohol

OTHER FACTORS

- ◆ Concerns about a student, faculty, or staff by peers
- ◆ A hunch or gut-level reaction that something is wrong

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THE SITUATION IS URGENT IF:

- ◆ Written or verbal statements mention despair, suicide or death
- ◆ Severe hopelessness, depression, isolation, and withdrawal are evident
- ◆ Statements are made to the effect that the individual is “going away for a long time”

THE SITUATION IS AN EMERGENCY IF:

- ◆ Physical or verbal aggression is directed at self, others, animals or property
- ◆ The individual is unresponsive to the external environment; he/she is incoherent, disconnected from reality/exhibiting psychosis or displaying unmitigated disruptive behavior
- ◆ The situation feels threatening or dangerous to you

You do not have to take on the role of counselor or diagnose a person. You need only to notice signs of distress and communicate these to Security, Human Resources, the Dean of Students Office, Counseling Services and/or Health Services. These professionals may be able to assess the individual and provide resources or a referral.

If you are concerned about immediate threats to safety call Colby Security at 5911

KEY CONTACTS:

Counseling Services = extension 4460, Eric Johnson Psy.D, Director

Dean of Students Office = extension 4250, Barbara Moore, Senior Associate Dean

Health Services = extension 4460, Paul Berkner, D.O. Medical Director; Lydia Bolduc Marden, PMHNP

Human Resources = extension 5500, Mark Crosby, Director

Security = extension 5530, Pete Chenevert, Director