

ASSISTING STUDENTS IN **DISTRESS**



SEE SOMETHING.

WVSU faculty and staff are in a unique position to demonstrate compassion for WVSU students in distress. Both undergraduate and graduate students may feel alone, isolated, and even hopeless when faced with academic and life challenges. These feelings can easily disrupt academic performance and may lead to difficulties coping and other serious consequences.

You may be the first person to **SEE SOMETHING** distressing in your students since you have frequent and prolonged contact with them.



SAY SOMETHING.

Students exhibiting troubling behaviors in your presence are likely having difficulties in other situations, including the classroom, with roommates, with family, and even in social settings. Trust your instincts and **SAY SOMETHING** if a student leaves you feeling worried, alarmed, or threatened!

DO SOMETHING.

Sometimes students cannot or will not turn to family or friends. **DO SOMETHING!** Your expression of concern may be a critical factor in saving a student's academic career or even their life. The purpose of this folder is to help you recognize symptoms of student distress and identify appropriate responses.

ACADEMIC INDICATORS

- Sudden decline in quality of work and grades
- Repeated absences
- Disturbing content in writing or presentations (e.g., violence, death)
- You find yourself doing more personal rather than academic counseling during office hours
- Continuous classroom disruptions

SAFETY RISK INDICATORS

- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Making implied or direct threats to harm self or others
- Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, rage, worthlessness, isolation, despair, acting out, suicidal ideations/ violent behaviors

PSYCHOLOGICAL INDICATORS

- Self-disclosure of personal distress that could include family problems, financial difficulties, depression, grief, or thoughts of suicide
- Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions, irritability or unusual apathy
- Verbal abuse (e.g., taunting, badgering, intimidation)
- Expressions of concern about the student by his/her peers

PHYSICAL INDICATORS

- Marked changes in physical appearance including deterioration in grooming, hygiene, or weight loss/ gain
- Excessive fatigue/sleep disturbance
- Intoxication, hangovers, or smelling of alcohol
- Disoriented or "out of it"

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DISRUPTIVE STUDENT

A student whose conduct is clearly and imminently reckless, disorderly, dangerous, or threatening, including self-harmful behavior.

TO GET HELP

If you are concerned for your own or others' safety due to a student's disruptive and/or threatening behavior, call 911 or the Campus Police.

DISTRESSED STUDENT

A student with persistent behaviors such as

- Overly anxious
- Sad
- Irritable
- Withdrawn
- Confused
- Lacks motivation and/or concentration
- Seeks constant attention
- Demonstrates bizarre or erratic behavior
- Expresses suicidal thoughts

IF A STUDENT IS CAUSING A DISRUPTION BUT DOES NOT POSE A THREAT

- Ensure your safety in the environment.
- Use a calm, non-confrontational approach to defuse/de-escalate the situation.
- Set limits by explaining how the behavior is inappropriate.
- If the disruptive behavior persists, notify the student that disciplinary action may be taken. Ask the student to leave. Inform him or her that refusal to leave may be a separate violation subject to discipline.
- Immediately report the incident to the appropriate resource. If you believe there is a safety risk, contact Campus Police Department.

RESOURCES & TIPS: BE PROACTIVE:

Engage students early on, pay attention to signs of distress, and set limits on disruptive behavior.

BE DIRECT: Don't be afraid to ask students directly if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, feeling confused, or having thoughts of harming themselves or others.

LISTEN SENSITIVELY AND CAREFULLY: Use a non-confrontational approach and a calm voice. Avoid threatening, humiliating, and intimidating responses.

SAFETY FIRST: The welfare of the campus community is the top priority when a student displays threatening or potentially violent behavior. Do not hesitate to call for help.

FOLLOW THROUGH: Direct the student to the physical location of the identified resource.

CONSULTATION AND DOCUMENTATION: Always document your interactions with distressed students and consult with your department chair, dean or supervisor after any incident.

RESPONSE PROTOCOL: Follow the table to determine who to contact when faced with a distressed or disruptive student.





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RESPONSE PROTOCOL:

Follow the table to determine who to contact when faced with a distressed student.

SITUATION	CONTACT
The student's conduct is clearly and imminently reckless, disorderly, dangerous, or threatening, including self-harm behavior.	Call 911 or Campus Police
The student shows signs of distress but I am unsure how serious it is. My interaction has left me feeling uneasy and/or really concerned about the student.	Consult with and/or refer to Counseling & Academic Support Services (CASS)
I'm not concerned for the student's immediate safety, but he or she is having significant academic and/or personal issues and could use some support or additional resources.	Refer students to an appropriate campus resource

Campus Resources

Enrollment Management & Student Affairs
304.766.4101
130 Ferrell Hall

Campus Police
304.766.3353 or 304.766.3181
Ferrell House

Counseling & Academic Support Services (CASS)
304.766.3168
1st Floor Sullivan Hall, East

Title IX Coordinator
304.533.5392
105 Cole Complex

Thomas Care Clinic
304.759.6050
004 James C. Wilson University Union (lower level)

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TITLE IX

Subject to exceptions that can apply to law enforcement personnel, counselors, clinicians or clergy, any employee or contractor who becomes aware of a potential incident of sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence or other assault or harassment involving a student at WVSU – either as victim or perpetrator – on or off campus, must promptly report the matter to the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator will undertake an investigation, as appropriate under the circumstances and take every precaution to ensure privacy.

For more information contact the Title IX Coordinator in
105 Cole Complex
304.533.5392
titleXcoordinator@wvstateu.edu.

WHAT ABOUT PRIVACY?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits the following: WVSU faculty and staff may disclose personally identifiable information from an educational record to appropriate individuals in connection with a health and safety emergency. Information may be released to parents, police, or others, if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student or other individual.

Observations of a student's conduct or statements made by a student are not educational records or FERPA protected. Such information should be shared with University personnel when there is a specific need to know with appropriate consideration for student

BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION TEAM (BIT)

The purpose of the BIT is to provide a venue for addressing students who exhibit behaviors of concern, particularly those who demonstrate the potential for violence toward self or others, and are disruptive to the mission of the University.

BIT Responsibility to the Campus

- To provide a centralized structure for campus departments that need help dealing with a student who is displaying concerning, disruptive, and/or distressed behavior.
- To develop a strategic plan of action to ensure the safety of the student and the campus at large.
- To ensure that information is shared among strategic partners concerned about student welfare.

Students exhibiting significant, concerning behaviors in relation to their personal, physical and emotional well-being should be referred to this team of professionals.

EXAMPLES OF CONCERNING BEHAVIORS INCLUDE:

- Unusual or erratic behavior in class, in the residence halls, during advising sessions, etc.
- Written work or creative expression with troubling themes or references.
- Verbal or written threats made by a student toward another student, faculty, and/or staff.
- Written or verbal expressions of suicidal ideation or intent.
- Other actions which cause an alarm or call into question the safety of the student or their peers.

BIT referrals can be submitted by faculty, staff, or students online at:
www.wvstateu.edu/EMSA/BIT

****Please remember that instances that involve an immediate risk/threat to the University community should be referred to Campus Police at 304.766.3353 or 304.766.3181.***

