

UF Helping Students in Distress

Brought to you by
U Matter, We Care
& Division of Student Life

A quick reference guide for recognizing, responding to and referring distressed students.



RECOGNIZE



RESPOND



REFER

HOW TO USE

1. Recognize indicators of distress

Common indicators are listed inside. Students may present with indicators not listed.

2. Respond appropriately

Each situation is unique. Use the tips and decision tree to determine the most appropriate response.

3. Refer the student

Use the list of resources on back cover to refer the student to the most appropriate campus resource.



REFER

Follow the decision tree to determine who to contact when you are concerned about a student who is distressed and/or disruptive. Emergency and campus resources are listed below.

Is the student a danger to themselves?

Yes

The student's conduct is clearly dangerous or threatening, including self-harm or harm to others.

Call 911 or UFPD at 352-392-1111

No

I am not concerned for anyone's immediate safety, but the student is having significant academic and/or personal issues and could use some support.

Refer student to campus resources, as appropriate.

I'm Not Sure

The student is with me currently and shows signs of distress, but it is not clear how serious it is. I feel uneasy and/or really concerned about the student.

Call CWC, 352-392-1575, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
If outside of hours or on a weekend you will be connected to an on-call counselor.

The student is not with me currently, but I am concerned about what they said (in an email/call) OR what they did (acted bizarrely, were aggressive/ disruptive) OR how they looked (unkempt, unwashed, or as if drugged/drank).

Submit Care Concern online at umatter.ufl.edu

Emergency Resources

- University of Florida Police Department (UFPD)

24/7 services to the UF community to promote safety across campus and aid crime victims. 911 or 352-392-1111. Request a co-responder team: a mental health clinician paired with a specialty trained crisis intervention officer.

- Alachua County Crisis Center

24/7 off-campus services for individuals in need of crisis and suicide intervention counseling. 352-264-6789

Urgent Resources

- Counseling & Wellness Center (CWC)

24/7 crisis, consultation, and counseling services, provides full range of mental health services. 352-392-1575

- Office of Victim Services

24/7 support for victims of actual or threatened violence, all services are free and confidential. 352-392-5648

- Dean of Students Office - CARE area

Helps students facing adverse events (e.g. housing/financial distress, MH/medical/family emergencies) and coordinates care across campus. 352-294-2273

Additional Resources

- Housing and Residence Life

24/7 support regarding on-campus life. 352-392-2161

- Title IX Compliance Office

The Title IX Compliance Office provides support to anyone affected by sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment, or violence. 352-294-8720

- Student Health Care Center (SHCC)

24/7 physical health consultation. 352-392-1161

- Field & Fork Pantry

The Alan and Cathy Hitchcock Field & Fork Pantry is a free resource for all students, staff and faculty at the University of Florida. 352-294-3601

- U Matter We Care

Resources to support students with various concerns, umatter.ufl.edu



RECOGNIZE

Indicators of Students in Distress

The existence of one or more of the following attributes may not indicate presence of distress. Look for groups, frequency and severity of behaviors not just isolated symptoms or a change that deviates from their previous pattern of behavior.

For Faculty & Staff

Academic

- Sudden decline in quality of work and grades
- Frequently missed classes and assignments
- Classroom disruptions
- Consistently seeking personal rather than professional advice
- Multiple requests for extensions/special considerations
- Doesn't respond to repeated requests for contact/meetings
- Non-compliance with class requirements
- Loss of focus, easily distracted
- Inattentive or zoning out
- Disturbing content in emails, assignments, or presentations

Physical

- Marked changes in physical appearance (e.g., poor grooming/hygiene or sudden weight loss/gain)
- Strange or unusual behavior
- Visibly intoxicated or smelling of alcohol or marijuana
- Depressed or lethargic mood or functioning
- Observable signs of injury (e.g., facial bruising or cuts)

Psychological

- Self-disclosure of personal distress (e.g., family problems, financial difficulties, assault, discrimination, legal difficulties)
- Unusual/disproportionate emotional response to events
- Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions
- Verbal abuse (e.g., taunting, badgering, intimidation)
- Expressions of concern about the student by peers
- Talking to themselves
- Being distracted by experiences or other people
- Lack of culturally appropriate eye contact

Safety Risk

- Verbal, written, or implied references to suicide, threat to others, or self-injurious behaviors
- Unprovoked anger or hostility/physical violence (e.g., shoving, grabbing, assaulting, use of weapon)
- Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, helplessness, isolation, rage, despair, threat to others or self-injurious behaviors
- Stalking or harassing
- Communicating threat to others, or self-injurious behaviors via email, correspondence, texting or phone call



RESPOND

Use these tips to determine the most appropriate response for a distressed student.

Mandatory Reporting

In addition to referring a student to resources, any sexual or gender-based harassment or assault requires mandated reporting. For questions regarding reporting, please contact UF Compliance & Ethics, Title IX Compliance Office.

titleix.ufl.edu/contact/

Stay Safe

Call the UF Police Department 352-392-1111 or 911 if there is an imminent danger to the student, you or anyone else.

Use Active Listening

Make eye contact, give your full attention. Restate what the student says to make sure you understand what is causing the distress and/or what they are asking for help with.

Stay Calm

Take a few deep breaths to calm yourself. Use a calm voice when talking and asking questions.

Ask Direct Questions

Don't be afraid to directly ask the student if they are having thoughts of harming themselves or others (by asking, you are not instilling the thought).

Take Your Time

If this is NOT an imminently dangerous situation, take time to think through what might be the most helpful next step.

Give Concrete Help

Help get them to the next step (e.g., contact the academic advisor with the student to make an appointment; help them call CWC to schedule an appointment).

Seek Consultation

You are not alone. Ask those around you for help. Consult with those around you and inform your supervisor CWC, DSO and inform your supervisor.

Avoid Offering Confidentiality

Remind students that it's an act of strength to seek help and that you want to connect them to the best resources available.