

Helping Students in Distress



At the University of Tampa, we care deeply about our students' well-being. As members of the UTampa community, faculty and staff play a crucial role in supporting our students' overall success. This guide is designed to help faculty and staff recognize, respond to, and refer students who may be dealing with academic, personal, or emotional challenges with compassion and support.



Immediate Assistance

Is the student's behavior clearly reckless or dangerous and/or is the student at immediate risk of harming self or others?

YES

IS STUDENT ON CAMPUS?

CALL CAMPUS SAFETY AT (813) 257-7777

IS STUDENT OFF CAMPUS?

CALL 911

NO

Follow These Steps

RECOGNIZE

signs that a student may be struggling



RESPOND

with empathy as each situation is unique

Use the tips and decision tree on the next page to guide your response



REFER

the student using the resources listed on the back cover



 **Recognize.** If you have a feeling that something is “off” or out of the ordinary behavior range of a student, you are usually correct.

Some observed behaviors that indicate distress may include:

Academic

- Repeated absences and/or decline in quality of work
- Unusual or concerning content in coursework or communications
- Continual requests for assignment extensions or course adjustments with no documentation
- Behavior that interferes with classroom, group work, or activity engagement
- Increased need for support that is more personal than academic

Physical/Behavioral

- Evidence of intoxication or impairment
- Consistently hungover
- Dramatic increase/decrease in energy level
- Excessive sleepiness or sleep disturbance
- Noticeable changes in physical appearance or hygiene
- Seeming disoriented or confused

Psychological/Interpersonal

- Self-disclosure of distress related to family, relationships, mental state, or finances
- Strained interpersonal relationships, isolating behaviors, lack of sense of belonging, or decreasing self-image
- Noticeable changes in behavioral patterns or habits
- Expressions of extreme hopelessness
- Unusual emotional response to events, such as exaggerated anger, sadness, or flat affect
- Disregarding boundaries
- Displays of paranoia, delusional thinking, or hallucinations
- Expressions of concern about the student by peers

Safety

- Noticeable physical injuries, such as bruises, cutting marks on arms or legs, or burns
- Verbal, written, or implied references to suicide, homicide, assault, or self-injury
- Unprovoked anger, hostility, or physical violence
- Stalking, closely tracking others, following others, or harassing behavior
- Preoccupation with violence, death, self-harm, and/or weapons in coursework or communications
- Frightening and/or disruptive behaviors

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Respond. Each situation is unique. Use these important tips to determine the most appropriate response for a distressed student.

BE STEADY

- Feeling overwhelmed is a common reaction and means you care
- Take three deep breaths and invite the student to join you
- Speak calmly with moderate pace and volume
- Offer the student water and get some for yourself, too

SAY WHAT YOU SEE

- Be direct
- Stick to the facts
- Don't make assumptions
- Describe the changes you have noticed
- Ask them if they are okay
- Listen to understand, not to respond

How are you, really?

You have seemed down recently. Is there anything you want to talk about?

I have missed you in class lately. Is everything ok?

SHOW YOU CARE

- Be present, patient, and listen to them
- Demonstrate empathy for what they are going through
- Let them know they are not alone, and you are there for them
- Provide them a space to be heard and don't make assumptions about them
- Be curious - ask them questions
- Describe changes you have noticed

That must be hard. I want to help you find the right resources.

That sounds really challenging. Let's figure out your next step.

CONNECT TO HELP

- Determine the need and resources
- Reaffirm your support and care
- Connect them to resources
- Encourage the student to check back in if needed
- Follow up to see if they need additional support

Thank you for sharing your experience. I am not an expert in this area, but I know someone who might be able to help. Would it be okay if I put you in contact with them?

*It sounds like you've been struggling, have you thought about visiting **Counseling Services**? I have heard great things from students.*

*I care about you, and I'm really concerned about what you've shared with me. To make sure you're safe, I'm going to call **CAMPUS SAFETY** so they can support you. You're not in trouble - I just want to make sure you're not alone in this.*

Mandatory Reporting

If you believe that the student may disclose sexual misconduct, inform them that you are not a confidential resource and will be required to submit a **Title IX Report**.

*I appreciate you trusting me with this. As an employee of the University, I have to share this with **TITLE IX**. You're not in trouble, this is to make sure you have support. They'll reach out to talk about options, but you decide what happens next. I'm here for you.*

Tips for After

INFORM YOUR SUPERVISOR

Alert your supervisor/chair/dean about your interaction. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits communication about a student of concern with those who have a legitimate educational interest or a need to know.

COMPLY WITH MANDATORY REPORTING

If a student discloses an incident of sexual or gender-based harassment or assault, you must submit a **Title IX Report**.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Reflect on your own boundaries, self-care, and support needs. Seek support from colleagues, supervisors, and department heads. Utilize the **Community of Care Toolkit** or the **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**.

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Refer. First, follow the steps below.

DOES THE STUDENT NEED IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE?

YES

The student's behavior is clearly reckless or dangerous and/or the student is at immediate risk of harming self or others.

WHAT TO DO:

If the student is on campus
**CALL CAMPUS SAFETY AT
(813) 257-7777**

OR

If the student is off campus
CALL 911

Follow-up by submitting a
[SPARTAN SUPPORT REFERRAL](#)

MAYBE

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

WHAT TO DO:

**CALL COUNSELING SERVICES AT
(813) 257-4114**
if between 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM

Let them know you have a student who needs to speak to someone and/or you need assistance in determining next steps.

OR

**CALL THE 24/7 SUPPORT LINE AT
(833) 755-0484**

Follow-up by submitting a
[SPARTAN SUPPORT REFERRAL](#)

NO

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

WHAT TO DO:

View the
WHERE TO REFER A STUDENT
chart included on the next page for additional support.

Encourage the student to set up an appointment or assist them in doing so.



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Where to Refer Students. Resources based on student's disclosed concern.

SIGNIFICANT EVENT

Victim of sexual misconduct
e.g. sexual harassment, sexual discrimination, stalking, domestic violence, and/or sexual assault

You must submit a [Title IX Report](#) online or by email at titleix@ut.edu and refer the student to [Victim Advocacy](#) at (813) 257-3900

Victim of a crime or bias-related incident

Submit a [Spartan Support Referral](#)

Death of a family member or close friend

ADAPTING TO COLLEGE LIFE

Generally concerning behavior

Submit a [Spartan Support Referral](#)

Wanting to get involved and connect with peers

Encourage the student to visit [Involve](#), the [Student Organization Suite](#), or the [Office of Access and Community Programs](#)

Submit a Campus Engagement and Belonging [Early Alert in Navigate](#)

Financial assistance or help with basic needs

Direct the student to the [Basic Needs Resources](#) website

Submit a [Spartan Support Referral](#)

Roommate conflict in on-campus housing

Tell the student to speak to their Resident Assistant or Area Coordinator
If the roommate's behavior is a violation of the student code of conduct, tell the student to submit a [Conduct Report](#)

Need for accommodation or concerns about existing accommodations

Students seeking accommodations should submit an [Accommodation Request](#)
Students already receiving accommodations should contact their [assigned Student Accessibility Services staff member](#)

WELL-BEING RELATED

Mental health concern

Encourage the student to contact [Counseling Services](#) for an appointment at (813) 257-4114
Also, provide the student with the 24/7 support line number (833) 755-0484

Submit a [Spartan Support Referral](#)

Physical health concern

Encourage the student to contact [Medical Services](#) for an appointment at (813) 253-6250

Submit a [Spartan Support Referral](#)

Feeling anxious, lonely, or stressed

Direct the student to [Wellness Services](#), encourage them to attend a [Resilience Reset Workshop](#) or participate in [Peer Wellness Coaching](#)

Disruptive behavior

Submit a [Conduct Report](#)
Refer to the [Classroom Disruption Policy](#) for classroom behavioral issues

ACADEMIC

Grading issue or professor concern

Students should first attempt to resolve concerns with their professor
If unresolved, contact the Department Chair
If still unresolved, contact the College Dean

Refer student to the [Grade Appeal Policy](#) or [Grade Forgiveness Policy](#) in the Catalog

Need academic support or repeated absences

Submit an [Early Alert in Navigate](#)

Encourage the student to contact the [Office of Academic Success Initiatives](#) and direct the student to the resources listed in the Navigate360 Student app