

# Dealing with Issues Involving Student Mental Health

## General Resources

**Dean of Student's Office** - Either faculty or students can contact the Office at 780.492. 4145 if they are unsure of what to do in addressing a situation or where to access the most appropriate services.

**Office of Safe Disclosure & Human Rights** – This office provides a confidential, neutral and safe place for individuals to speak in confidence. The Office assists in identifying the most effective means of resolution of a concern and will refer individuals to the appropriate resources on campus. Call 780.492.7325 for information or assistance.

**EFAP Advice Line** – This service provides telephonic consultation and coaching by a clinical psychologist for both faculty and staff in knowing how to approach difficult conversations. Call 780.428.7587 for guidance 24/7.

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## Ensuring Safe Disclosure

Individuals who are the recipient of disclosed information should keep the following principles in mind:

**Confidentiality** - the identity of the person making the report shall be protected to the extent possible under government legislation, University policies, and collective agreements in effect at the time of the alleged misconduct.

**Reprisal** -the University will not tolerate any reprisal, directly or indirectly, against anyone who, in good faith, makes a disclosure.

**Respondent Rights** - individuals against whom allegations are made will maintain the rights, privileges and protections afforded to them through the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) Act and other applicable government legislation, University policies, and collective agreements in effect at the time of the alleged misconduct.

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## What are Observable Behaviors/Indicators of Concern?

Identification of students in distress can be made easier by looking for common indicators. Remember, not all indicators need to be present to be of concern or to warrant action on your part. **Behavior that is strange or inappropriate cannot be ignored.**

Academic Indicators	Emotional Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Significant drop in grades</li><li>Inappropriate content in writing (relating to suicide, violence or death) or incoherent writing</li><li>High number of absences from class</li><li>Sleeping or extreme drowsiness in class</li><li>Chronic lateness/requests for extension on assignments</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Emotional outbursts (anger, crying, giggling)</li><li>High levels of anxiety or worry; negative statements</li><li>Extreme mood swings, agitation, restlessness or pacing</li><li>Obvious confusion; excessive clarification of instructions; lack of orientation to time, place or person</li><li>Statements indicating hopelessness or helplessness</li><li>Red or swollen eyes, or dark circles around eyes</li></ul>
Behavioral Indicators	Social Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Aggressive or disruptive behavior</li><li>Deterioration in personal hygiene or inappropriate dress</li><li>Dramatic weight loss or gain</li><li>Hostile or sarcastic remarks</li><li>Vacant staring; excessive day dreaming</li><li>Reports seeing or hearing things not there</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Recent isolation from other students</li><li>Little or no participation in class with other students or faculty</li><li>Unusual or changed pattern of interaction with other students or in class</li><li>Frequent requests to talk to instructor after class on personal issues</li><li>Argumentative with instructors or university staff</li></ul>

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## Dealing with an Upset Student

If you choose to approach a student you are concerned about, or if a student reaches out to you for help:

- Remember your role.** Do not delve into personal issues. Your role is to provide support and to make referrals when support is not sufficient. Maintain boundaries; do not get involved beyond what is comfortable and appropriate for you.
- Acknowledge** the student's feelings as well as your observations of the situation. Express your concerns directly and honestly. Empathize without agreeing or disagreeing with what they are saying. **Guide them to help.**
- Listen** in a sensitive, non-threatening way. Allow the student to explain the situation in their own words.
- Assure** the student things can get better. Express your willingness to help the student address the problem by referral.
- Restate** what has been communicated. Where appropriate, normalize the student's feelings by referring to the normal reactions everyone has during stressful times. **Summarize** action proposed to make sure there is a mutual understanding.
- Refer** the student for assistance if appropriate. When making a referral it is important to point out that help is available and seeking help is a sign of strength and courage rather than a sign of weakness.
- Write up** the discussion in an email and send it to the student. Request confirmation recommended action has been taken.