

CLEMSON

COUNSELING & PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

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STUDENTS IN DISTRESS: A GUIDE FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

College years are characterized by multiple transitions. Stress is a normal and expected reaction to these transitions. Students may experience stress associated with academic demands, family problems, social relations, work, financial concerns and cultural experiences. Resources that students had while living at home are altered and they may find themselves isolated, lonely, and frustrated. While most students face stress and cope with the emerging demands of college life, for some, the pressures become overwhelming and unmanageable. The inability to cope effectively with emotional distress can lead to disruptions in a student's overall functioning and pose a serious threat to academic success. As faculty/staff, you are in a unique position to show concern and care. Proactive, timely, and at times reactive expressions of concern can be helpful in regulating and maintaining the emotional equilibrium that can lead to a successful college career.

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with information that will assist you in identifying students in distress and specific options for intervention and for referral to campus resources.

Tips for Recognizing a Serious Mental Health Crisis (Emergency Situation)

A crisis is a situation where a student's usual coping style becomes overwhelmed and the emotional and physiological responses escalate. With increasing emotions, coping becomes less effective until the person may become disoriented, non-functional, or attempt harm. If a student is in serious mental health crisis, one might see the following:

- Highly disruptive behavior (physical/verbal aggression)
- Overt suicidal threats (written or verbal)
- Homicidal threats, (written or verbal, attempted suicide or assault)
- Inability to communicate clearly (incoherent, garbled, slurred speech)
- Loss of contact with reality (seeing/hearing things that are not there)

What to Do When You Suspect a Mental Health Crisis

For consultation in assessing the situation, call CAPS at 656-2451 during 8-5 Monday-Friday. If the student is willing, offer to walk the student to CAPS. Students in crisis will be served immediately to stabilize their safety. If emergency is after hours/weekends, contact 656-2222 and request that the CAPS counselor on-call be contacted.

If immediate assistance is needed on site, contact 911 or CUPD 656-2222.

While Waiting for Aid to Arrive:

DO-Provide a secure, safe, quiet place
 DO-Invite to stay until help arrives
 DO-Listen actively and show empathy
 DO-Maintain a straightforward, supportive attitude

DON'T-Leave student alone
 DON'T-Try to restrain if he/she wants to leave
 DON'T-Challenge or shock student
 DON'T-Minimize student's distress

Tips for Recognizing Distressed Students (Not in Crisis/Emergency)

Everyone experiences symptoms of distress at one time or another. However, if symptoms persist over time and/or increase in severity, this may indicate need for assistance.

Marked Changes in Attitude towards Academic Performance

Poor preparation for class
 Drop in performance
 Expressions of non-caring about classes
 Excessive absences or tardiness to class
 Excessive anxiety about class work
 Strong reactions to class material
 Exaggerated emotional responses that are obviously inappropriate to the situation
 Exaggerated need to oppose the teaching or discussions
 Inability to communicate clearly
 Perfectionism and excessive worry

Changes in Behavior

Depressed or lethargic mood
 Avoiding participation in class activities
 Unusual or changed pattern of interaction with others
 Apathy or "in a daze"
 Oversleeping or not sleeping enough
 Disruptive behavior
 Consistently avoiding eating with others
 Marked increase or decrease in energy level
 Marked increase in irritability
 Low tolerance for frustration

Unusual Appearance

Changes in personal hygiene or dress style
 Dramatic weight loss or gain
 Swollen or red eyes

What Can You Do? (Not in Crisis/Emergency)

If you choose to approach a student, or if a student comes to you for help with personal problems, the following suggestions are recommended.

TALK with the student in private. You may need to schedule a time to talk so that both of you are not rushed and preoccupied. Express your concern by referring to student's behavior in non-judgmental terms. Ask open-ended questions. Express empathy. Avoid asking "why" questions.

LISTEN actively and give the student your undivided attention. Communicate understanding by your verbal response, facial expression and body posture. Reflect feelings to make sure you understand.

INSTILL hope. Most situations have options. Assist the student by moving away from focusing exclusively on the problem. Suggest resources and support the student's desire to move beyond the problem.

AVOID judgmental statements, evaluations, or criticism. Avoid comparisons that place the student at a disadvantage. Respect the student's value system even if it is different from your own.

MAINTAIN clear professional boundaries. The focus of the contact is on the student. Avoid unnecessary self-disclosures. Clarify rules and enforce them in the same manner as you would with any other Student.

REFER to adequate resources. Encourage accessing services and follow through as signs of strength and courage rather than signs of weakness or failure. Support a student's timetable for accessing services. If needed, assist with setting up of appointment and/or going to the appointment.

FOLLOW-UP with the student and see if they followed through with referral. Allow the student to express reactions to the appointment.

CONSULT CAPS if you need guidance with the intervention. .

What to Expect When a Student Arrives at CAPS

Although CAPS is open 8-5, Monday through Friday, the preferred way for students to access services is through the CU Now, Walk-in Clinic. It operates, Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Students can walk in and be seen on a first-come, first-served basis. Students are asked to complete the initial paper work which takes 20-30 minutes and then be seen by a counselor for a brief session to assess needs. Emergencies will be worked in at any time.

CAPS Services

Individual, Couple/Family and Group Counseling. The treatment modality will be determined by the student's needs. A student that has paid the health fee is eligible for up to 10 individual sessions/semester. There is no session limit for couple/family and group.

Consultation and Outreach Services. CAPS has a formal liaison program with the Housing Department. CAPS conducts numerous educational programs on various topics of interest to students/faculty/staff.

Lifestyles. This program offers education and treatment for alcohol/drug misuse, abuse and dependence. A student can access this program through CUNow. If a student is mandated to attend Lifestyles, a \$50.00 monitoring fee is required.

Testing and Evaluation Services. Learning disorders batteries are given for a limited number of students each semester. Students are eligible for these evaluations on a first-

come, first-serve basis. Students must go to the CAPS office at the beginning of the semester and request this service. There is a fee for this service.

CU CARES. (Counseling*Advocacy*Referral*Education*Support) Relationship and Sexual Violence Services. Program offers specialized interventions to victims of relationship and sexual violence. Strong emphasis is placed on prevention by educating both men and women through dynamic programming.

CU Sister/CU Brother. Program aims to increase awareness of positive contributions sororities and fraternities make and to provide a referral system for assessment/education regarding alcohol/drug concerns.

Eating Disorders Program. Program utilizes a multidisciplinary approach to the treatment of eating disorders that includes, medical, nutritional and psychological.

Psychiatric Consultation. Psychiatric consultation monitors medication regimen. There is a fee for this service.

For a full listing of all CAPS' services, please visit: <http://stuaff.clemson.edu/redfern/caps/>
Visit the Counseling Center Village for virtual pamphlets collection on mental health issues. <http://ub-counseling.buffalo.edu/ccv.html>

Resources Monday through Friday, 8-5

CAPS Appointment Line	656-2451
CU CARES	656-1294
Health Center Appointment Line	656-1541
Pharmacy	656-3562
Women's Health	656-1541
Health Education	656-0141
Student Insurance	656-3561

Emergency Numbers

CAPS counselor on-call	656-2222 (Leave a phone number and ask for CAPS counselor on-call to return call)
CU Ambulance	911
CU Police Department	656-2222
Clemson Urgent Care	654-6800
Oconee Memorial Hospital	882-3351 (Seneca)
Anderson Area Medical Center	(864) 261-1000 (Anderson)
Cannon Memorial Hospital	(864) 878-4791 (Pickens)
Rape Crisis Council of Pickens	(800) 302-9719 Pager
Foothills Alliance Center (Rape Crisis in Anderson)	(800) 585-8952 Hotline

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