Recognizing and Responding to Students in Distress

Distress may manifest in specific student behaviors or may be recognizable by the reactions you have to the student in distress. If you notice any of the behaviors listed here or simply feel concerned that a fellow student is distressed, this guide will may assist you in responding in a way that connects the student with the most appropriate help.

**STUDENT BEHAVIORS**
- A behavioral or emotional change that is unusual for the student or continues over a period of time
- Social withdrawal
- A change in hygiene or appearance
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- A decline in academic performance or repeated absences from class
- Excessive or inappropriate anger, sadness, or energy
- Unusual thoughts or behaviors

**REATIONS TO A STUDENT’S BEHAVIOR**
- Feeling emotional drained by a student
- Feeling as though you are the only one who can help the students
- Feeling alarmed or frightened
- Feeling uncomfortable about a student’s comments or behavior
- Concern about a student’s ability to function

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**Is there a danger to self or others?**

- **Yes, or the student needs immediate attention**
  - Call 911 or Campus Police (2490)

- **No or not sure, but I am concerned**
  - Call 2840 Counseling Services (includes 24-hour crisis hotline) 4940 Residence Life

- **No, but student seems to be having academic or personal issues**

**Referral Tips:**
- Be honest about the limits of your time, ability, and expertise.
- Express your concern and let the student know you think they should get help from another source.
- Assure them that it is normal for students to get help at some point during college.
- Assist the student in choosing the best resource.
- Try to help the student predict what to expect if they follow through on the referral.

**DO**
- Speak privately when possible
- Remain calm
- Show concern & interest
- Describe what concerns you
- Seek consultation when you are unsure

**DON’T**
- Remain in a situation that feels unsafe to you
- Assume the role of a counselor
- Ignore a feeling that something isn’t right
- Assume that someone else has intervened

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**Refer to Appropriate Campus Services:**
- Schacht Center Services:
  - 2840 Counseling Services
  - 2800 Health & Wellness Services
- Gender-Based & Sexual Violence
  - 2141 Title IX Office
- Identity Based Concerns
  - 4940 Multicultural Affairs
  - 2141 Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Academic Resources
  - 4915 Class Deans
  - 2071 Office of Disability Services
- Other Resources
  - 4940 Residence Life
  - 2750 Center for Religious/Spiritual Life
  - 4905 Office for International Students
  - 3056 Jacobson Center
  - 3091 Spinelli Center