

Managing Student Distress & Disruption

A guide for addressing urgent safety and mental health needs of SU students.

Stay Safe

When a student displays threatening or potentially violent behavior towards self or others, safety is the top priority. Coordinated professional help and follow-up care are effective ways to prevent suicide and violence.

Trust Instincts

If you are concerned about a student, consult your designated supervisor or Department Chair. Promptly report safety concerns to [Public Safety](#).

De-Escalate & Support

Distressed students can be sensitive. Demonstrate empathic listening skills and avoid threatening, potentially embarrassing or intimidating statements. Help students connect with the resources they need.

Listen

Vulnerable students need to be heard and helped. They may find it difficult to articulate their distress. Ask directly if they feel their functioning is impaired or if they have thoughts of harming themselves or others.

Share

State and federal laws and University policies mandate reporting in many crisis situations. [The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) allows faculty and staff to report student health and safety concerns to relevant campus offices trained to handle situations with sensitivity and care. Taking appropriate action does not violate a student's privacy.

Consult

Consult with appropriate University personnel to coordinate care for the student. Report serious or persistent behavior to [Public Safety](#), [Dean of Students](#), and/or the [Students of Concern Committee](#).

Follow-Up

Document the incident in accordance with your role and campus duties. Follow up with the student to re-assess how the student is doing and whether more assistance is needed. Continue to consult on the student's behalf as needed.

Take Care

Helping a troubled student can take a toll on your personal well-being. Make sure to acknowledge what you've been through and receive adequate support.

Managing Student Distress & Disruption

DISTRESSED BEHAVIOR

WHAT IS DISTRESSED BEHAVIOR?

A student in distress may exhibit a variety of signs and symptoms. Of particular concern is any time a student exhibits deterioration in level of functioning or inability to function.

WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS OF DISTRESS IN STUDENTS?

- Marked change in personality, behavior, or mood
- Thoughts about death, dying, or suicide
- Inability to function at previous level of functioning
- Disruption in ability to meet obligations

Emotional Signs Feeling sad, empty, alone, or hopeless Feeling overwhelmed Easily frustrated or irritable Mood swings or changes Overreacting to situations Anxiety or panic	Cognitive Signs Self-critical thinking: "I'm stupid." Self-doubt Racing thoughts Difficulty concentrating Excessive worry Recurring thoughts of death or suicide
Academic and Social Signs Difficulty balancing demands Missing classes or assignments Difficulty managing relationships Isolating from others or difficulty being alone	Physical Signs Eating or sleeping more or less than usual Change in personal hygiene Change in physical health Heart racing, shortness of breath

HOW SHOULD I DEAL WITH A DISTRESSED STUDENT?

THE DOs

- DO speak with the student privately
- DO let the student know you are concerned about their welfare
- DO express your concern in behavioral, non-judgmental terms
- DO tell the student you are willing to help
- DO listen carefully to what the student is troubled about
- DO help the student explore options
- DO make referrals to the appropriate campus department
- DO maintain clear and consistent boundaries and expectations
- DO know your limits and enlist the help of others as appropriate
- DO document the interaction or incident

THE DON'Ts

- DON'T promise confidentiality
- DON'T ignore unusual behavior

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

WHAT IS DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR?

Behavior that interferes with students, faculty or staff and their access to an appropriate educational or work environment.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR?

- Yelling or screaming
- Persistent and unreasonable demands for time and attention
- Words or actions that intimidate or harass another
- Words or actions that cause another to fear for personal safety
- Threats of physical assault

HOW SHOULD I DEAL WITH DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR?

Disruptive behavior should not be ignored. Remain calm. Remind yourself that it is not about you; it is about the situation. Tell the student that such behavior is inappropriate and there are consequences for failing to improve the disruptive behavior. Many disruptive situations involve anger. **Recognize that the period of peak anger usually lasts 20-30 seconds.**

HOW SHOULD I DEAL WITH A DISRUPTIVE STUDENT?

THE DOs

- DO listen through the anger for the immediate needs
- DO acknowledge the feelings of the individual
- DO allow the student to vent and tell you what is upsetting to them. Use silence to allow the student to talk it out
- DO set limits. Explain clearly and directly what behaviors are acceptable: "I will be willing to speak with you as soon as you lower your voice"
- DO be firm, steady, consistent, and honest
- DO focus on what you can do to help resolve the situation
- DO make personal referrals. Give a name of a campus resource and staff member when possible, and call ahead to brief the person
- DO document and report the behavior to [Public Safety](#), [Dean of Students](#), and/or the [Students of Concern Committee \(SOCC\)](#)

THE DON'Ts

- DON'T interrupt
- DON'T get into an argument or shouting match
- DON'T blame, ridicule or use sarcasm
- DON'T touch or make sudden motion towards the student
- DON'T ignore warning signs that the person is about to explode
- DON'T ignore your own limitations

SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR

WHAT IS SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR?

Behavior or statements indicating that an individual may be a serious risk for suicide.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR?

- Threats of wanting to kill or hurt self
- Seeking or looking for ways to kill or hurt self (e.g., seeking access to firearms, available pills, or other means)
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide, especially when these actions are out of the ordinary for the student

WHAT ARE WARNING SIGNS FOR SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR?

Behaviors or statements indicating that an individual may be at serious risk for suicide or suicidal behaviors. Should you witness, hear, or see a student exhibiting suicidality, contact Public Safety for assistance. Warning signs for suicide include:

- Expressing hopelessness or purposelessness
- Expressing rage, uncontrolled anger, or desiring revenge
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities
- Feeling trapped or unable to resolve situation
- Alcohol or drug use
- Withdrawing from friends, family, or society
- Expressing anxiety, agitation, or difficulty sleeping
- Dramatic mood changes
- Expressing lack of reason to live

HOW SHOULD I DEAL WITH A SUICIDAL STUDENT?

THE DOs

- DO take all suicide threats, gestures, and attempts seriously
- DO let the student know you are concerned about their immediate safety and welfare
- DO tell the student that you are going to help connect them with the appropriate resources to ensure their safety
- DO call or connect the student with [Public Safety](#) or [CAPS](#) for assistance

THE DON'Ts

- DON'T promise confidentiality
- DON'T ignore the situation

COUNSELING & PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

HOW DO I CONTACT CAPS?

Phone: 206-296-6090 | Fax: 206-296-6096

Website: www.seattleu.edu/caps/

Office Location:

[James C. Pigott Pavilion for Leadership](#) (PAVL) Room 120

Appointment Hours:

Monday - Friday: 8am - Noon and 1 - 4:30pm

Urgent Care Hours:

Monday - Friday: 10am and 3pm

WHAT IS CAPS?

- CAPS provides free and confidential, time-limited, [individual & group counseling](#) for [continuous or enrolled](#) students at SU
- Services are provided by licensed mental health professionals
- To make an [appointment](#), call or stop by the office
- For more urgent mental health needs that cannot wait for a regularly scheduled appointment, students are encouraged to come during [Urgent Care](#) hours or go their nearest ER

HOW SHOULD I REFER A STUDENT TO CAPS?

- [Faculty/Staff](#) can encourage students in crisis to schedule an initial appointment or to utilize urgent care at CAPS
- If at any time you are unsure or need assistance regarding a potential student in crisis, call CAPS for [consultation](#) with an available counselor
- CAPS is not staffed or equipped to provide [Emergency Treatment](#). For mental health emergencies wherein a student needs immediate assistance in staying safe from self or other, call 911 or Public Safety at 206-296-5911 immediately
- CAPS services are [confidential](#), which means that CAPS staff cannot confirm or deny whether a student is receiving services. This is in accordance with legal practice under Washington state law. CAPS can receive information about a student in crisis in an effort to coordinate the appropriate level of care

**Counseling and
Psychological Services**

**WHEN IN DOUBT ABOUT SAFETY
CALL 911 OR PUBLIC SAFETY AT 206-296-5911**

CAMPUS WELLNESS RESOURCES

Student Development Office, 206-296-6066, STNC 140

- **Dean of Students Office**, 206-296-6060
<http://www.seattleu.edu/deanofstudents/>
- **Student of Concern Committee (SOCC)** submission form:
<http://www.seattleu.edu/studentdevelopment/socc/submission/>

Office of Human Resources, 206-296-5870, RINA 200
<http://www.seattleu.edu/hr>

Employee Assistance Program (for faculty/staff), 206-654-4144
<http://www.wellspringeap.org/login>

Counseling & Psychological Services, 206-296-6090, PAVL 120
<http://www.seattleu.edu/caps/>

Student Health Center (SHC), 206-296-6300, BELL 107
<https://www.seattleu.edu/health/>

Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), 206-296-6070, STCN 320
<http://www.seattleu.edu/oma/>

Housing & Residence Life (HRL), 206-296-6305, Campion 100
<http://www.seattleu.edu/housing/>

Wellness and Health Promotion, 206-296-2593, STCN 380
<http://www.seattleu.edu/healthpromotion/>

Commuter and Transfer Student Services, 206-296-6291, PAVL 180
<http://www.seattleu.edu/ctsl/>

Disabilities Services, 206-296-5740, LOYA 100
<https://www.seattleu.edu/DisabilitiesServices/>

Campus Ministry, 206-296-6075, STCN 120
<http://www.seattleu.edu/campus-ministry/>

EMERGENCY RESOURCES

CAMPUS SAFETY RESOURCES

Public Safety, USVC Room 102
<http://www.seattleu.edu/safety/>
Public Safety Emergency 206-296-5911
Public Safety Non-emergency 206-296-5990
Night Hawk Escort/Patrol 206-398-4295
24 Hour Walking Escort 206-296-5990

OFF-CAMPUS SAFETY RESOURCES

Seattle Police and Fire **911**
King County 24-Hour Crisis Line 206-461-3222
Swedish Cherry Hill Emergency 206-320-2111
Swedish First Hill Emergency 206-386-2573
Harborview Emergency 206-731-3074

24 HOUR SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINES

King County Crisis Clinic 206-461-3222
<http://crisisclinic.org/find-help/crisis-line/> 866-427-4747
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-8255
<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
The Trevor Project 866-488-7386
<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

Veterans Crisis Line



1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE™

1-800-273-TALK
1-800-273-8255
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org



The Trevor Helpline
866.4.U.TREVOR
FOR LGBT AND QUESTIONING YOUTH
FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL, 24/7