

# Assisting Students in Distress

See Something. Say Something. Do Something.

## See Something.

UCI faculty/staff and graduate teaching/research assistants are in a unique position to demonstrate compassion for UCI students in distress.

Both undergraduate and graduate students may feel alone, isolated, and even hopeless when faced with academic and life challenges. These feelings can easily disrupt academic performance and may lead to dysfunctional coping and other serious consequences.

You may be the first person to **SEE SOMETHING** distressing in a student since you have frequent and prolonged contact with them. The University of California, in collaboration with the California Mental Health Services Authority (CaMHSA), requests that you act with compassion in your dealings with such students.



## Say Something.

Students exhibiting troubling behaviors in your presence are likely having difficulties in various settings including the classroom, with roommates, with family and in even in social settings.

Trust your instincts and **SAY SOMETHING** if a student leaves you feeling worried, alarmed or threatened!

### Campus Emergency Notifications

**zotALERT** – UCIPD will send out emergency text message notifications in the event of a known threat to the campus.

Sign up for zotALERT here: [www.oit.uci.edu/zotalert/](http://www.oit.uci.edu/zotalert/)

**zotALERTs may advise you of actions to take to keep safe such as:**

**Secure in place:** Go to the nearest room or office and close and lock the door. Turn off lights and close blinds. If outside, get inside the nearest building.

**Evacuate:** Evacuate to your designated Assembly Area, unless you are directed otherwise.

## Do Something.

Sometimes students cannot, or will not turn to family or friends. **DO SOMETHING!** Your expression of concern may be a critical factor in saving a student's academic career or even their life.

The purpose of this folder is to help you recognize symptoms of student distress and identify appropriate referrals to campus resources.

### Am I Allowed to Share the Information I Have about this Student of Concern?

According to the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy ACT (FERPA), University faculty and staff are permitted to disclose information about a student with appropriate university officials when there is an urgent health and/or safety concern.

Academic Indicators	Physical Indicators	Safety Risk Indicators	Psychological Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sudden decline in quality of work and grades</li> <li>Repeated absences</li> <li>Bizarre content in writings or presentations</li> <li>Multiple requests for extensions</li> <li>You find yourself doing more personal rather than academic counseling during office hours</li> <li>Overly demanding of faculty/staff attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marked changes in physical appearance including deterioration in grooming, hygiene or weight loss/gain</li> <li>Excessive fatigue/sleep disturbance</li> <li>Intoxication, hang over or smelling of alcohol</li> <li>Multiple requests for extensions</li> <li>Disoriented or "out of it"</li> <li>Garbled, tangential or slurred speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unprovoked anger or hostility</li> <li>Implying or making a direct threat to harm self or others</li> <li>Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, rage, worthlessness, isolation, despair, acting out, suicidal ideations/violent behaviors — a "cry for help"</li> <li>Communicating threats via email, correspondence, texting or phone calls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-disclosure of personal distress family problems, financial difficulties, contemplating suicide, grief</li> <li>Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions, irritability or unusual apathy</li> <li>Verbal abuse (e.g., taunting, badgering, intimidation)</li> <li>Expressions of concern about the student by their peers</li> </ul>

**UCI** Wellness, Health & Counseling Services

Campus Resources for Students	
Campus Assault Resources & Education (CARE)	949.824.7273
Campus Social Worker	949.824.1418
Counseling Center	949.824.6457
Dean of Students	949.824.5590
Disability Services Center (DSC)	949.824.7497
Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (OEOD)	949.824.5594
International Center	949.824.7249
LGBT Resource Center	949.824.3277
Office of the Ombudsman	949.824.7256
UCI Police Department	949.824.5223
Office of Student Conduct	949.824.5181
Student Health Center	949.824.5301
Campus Resources for Faculty & Staff	
ComPsych Guidance Resources/EAP	844.824.3273
Worklife & Wellness	949.824.5429
Office of the Ombudsman	949.824.7256
Workplace Violence Prevention (UCIPD)	949.824.5223
Campus Consultation Team	949.824.4642
Resources in the Community	
2-1-1 Local Resources	211
Irvine City Police Department	949.724.7000
National Suicide Prevention Hotline	800.273.8255
Hoag Memorial Hospital (Newport Beach)	949.764.4624
UC Irvine Medical Center	714.456.7890
Western Medical Center Hospital (Santa Ana)	714.835.3555

**Still unsure? For consultation or emergency counseling call the Counseling Center.**

**Medical Emergency: 911**  
**For illness or injury**  
 Non-urgent: 949.824.5301  
 Student Health Center

**Refer students to Support Services Resources**

- Counseling Center
- Student Health Center
- CARE
- Campus Social Worker

**Administrative/Student Conduct**

- School Academic Advisor
- Division of Undergraduate Education
- Graduate Advisor
- Graduate Division
- University Registrar
- Office of the Ombudsman

**Distressed Student**  
 A student with persistent behaviors such as

- unduly anxious
- sad
- irritable
- withdrawn
- confused
- lacks motivation and/or concentration
- seeks constant attention
- demonstrates bizarre or erratic behavior
- expresses suicidal thoughts

**Disruptive Student**  
 A student whose conduct is clearly and imminently reckless, disorderly, dangerous, or threatening, including self-harmful behavior.

**Safety concern**  
 If you are concerned for your or others' safety due to a student's disruptive and/or threatening behavior call 911 or the UCI Police Department.

**If a student is causing a disruption but does not pose a threat**

- Ensure your safety in the environment.
- Use a calm, non-confrontational approach to defuse/de-escalate the situation.
- Set limits by explaining how the behavior is inappropriate.
- If behavior continues, ask the student to stop and warn them that official action may be taken.
- If the disruptive behavior persists, notify the student that disciplinary action may be taken.
- Inform them that refusal to leave may be a separate violation subject to discipline.

**Office of Student Conduct**  
 Immediately report the incident to the Office of Student Conduct

**Do Something.**

**See Something.**

**Response Protocol** Follow the chart to determine what to do when faced with a distressed or disruptive student.

**Is the student a danger to self, or others, or does the student need emergency assistance?**

**“Yes”**  
The student’s conduct is clearly and imminently reckless, disorderly, dangerous, or threatening and is suggestive of harm to self or others in the community.

**Call 911 or Campus Police 949.824.5223**

**After speaking with police report the concern to: Campus Consultation Team by contacting the Associate Vice Chancellor 949.824.4642**

**“I’m not sure”**  
The student shows signs of distress, but I am not sure how serious it is. My interaction has left me feeling uneasy and/or concerned about the student.

**Call the Counseling Center for consultation 949.824.6457  
After Hours & Holidays: select the after hours service option to be connected to a live mental health specialist**

**“No”**  
I am not concerned for the student’s immediate safety, but he/she is having significant academic and/or personal issues and could use some support or additional resources.

**Refer student to an appropriate campus resource. See back panel for options.  
  
For a complete list visit: [www.whcs.uci.edu/csw](http://www.whcs.uci.edu/csw)**



**How to Reach Out and Refer** Use these tips to help you refer a student in need of assistance.

Preparing to reach out to the student	Connecting with the student	Making the referral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Know the available campus resources and the referral process.</li> <li>Seek suggestions from experienced colleagues and the department chair.</li> <li>If in need of additional consultation, contact the Counseling Center to explore the issues involved and course of intervention.</li> <li>Allow sufficient time to thoroughly address the issues of concern.</li> <li>Review your physical environment and make provisions for your safety and that of others. If necessary, notify colleagues in close proximity of your intended intervention.</li> <li>Remain calm and know whom to call for help in case of need.</li> <li>If you decide not to have direct contact with the student, refer incident to the proper resources, including the Campus Consultation Team if appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen supportively. Repeat the student’s statement to clarify and to demonstrate an understanding of the student’s perspective.</li> <li>Do not challenge or become argumentative with the student.</li> <li>Do not try to minimize the student’s distress.</li> <li>If safe, meet and talk in private to minimize embarrassment and defensiveness.</li> <li>Clearly express your concerns focusing on the behavior in non-disparaging terms.</li> <li>Ask if the student wants to hurt themselves. Asking does not plant ideas in the student’s mind.</li> <li>If a student expresses a direct threat to self or others, or acts in a bizarre, highly irrational and disruptive way, contact UCIPD.</li> <li>Offer supportive alternatives, resources and referrals.</li> <li>Respect the student’s privacy without making false promises of confidentiality.</li> <li>Explore the student’s support system(s).</li> <li>Emphasize the importance of professional help for the student.</li> <li>Document all incidents and attempts to resolve the situation. Be factual and objective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommend services and provide student with realistic expectations. Note that some campus resources can offer confidential support while others are required by mandates to respond or report.</li> <li>Reassure the student that students often seek help over the course of their college career to effectively achieve their goals.</li> <li>Direct the student to a preferred assistance source.</li> <li>Be frank with the student about your limits (time, expertise, student’s reluctance to talk).</li> <li>Frame any decision to seek and accept help as an intelligent and wise choice.</li> <li>Make sure the student understands what actions are necessary.</li> <li>Encourage and assist the student to make and keep an appointment.</li> <li>If necessary, find someone to stay with the student while calls to the appropriate resources are made, and offer to escort the student.</li> <li>Set a follow-up appointment with the student.</li> </ul>

Find more helpful referral information online: [www.counseling.uci.edu/#staff](http://www.counseling.uci.edu/#staff)

**Personal support for faculty and staff after working with a distressed or disruptive student:  
UC Irvine EAP administered by ComPsych Guidance Resources 844.824.3723**

**Say Something.**