

# A Guide to Helping Students

*Who are Distressed or Disruptive*

College students of all ages face many stressors during college and faculty members are in a good position to identify students who have problems. Here are some general guidelines to help you when you encounter a student who is distressed or exhibits disruptive behavior. Identifying students who may have problems won't get them in trouble but is the first step to getting help for them.

## High-Risk Behaviors

These behaviors may indicate an imminent safety risk to the student or the community and require assistance from campus and community responders:

- Expressed intent to harm self or others
- Intense or uncontrollable anger
- Brandishing a weapon
- Drug or alcohol overdose
- Fighting or assaultive behavior
- Overt threats to kill
- Suicide attempt or threat
- Bizarre delusions or hallucinations

**What to do:** Call the ECU Police Department at 911 and describe the problem. The ECU Police will respond as well as obtain assistance from other agencies (i.e. rescue or crisis intervention) as needed.

## Moderate-Risk Behaviors

Moderate-risk behaviors are not usually life-threatening but may be a sign that the student's coping skills are being challenged. Examples of moderate-risk behaviors include:

- Withdrawal from friends or daily activities
- Irritability with others or acting out in anger
- Increased isolation from friends
- Erratic behavior
- Disruptive classroom behavior
- Indications of alcohol or drug use interfering with academic or social performance
- Indirect threats to self or others
- Comments about weapons
- Serious emotional distress
- Expressing hopelessness or helplessness
- Disturbing content in academic work

**What to do:** Document the behavior and refer the student or report the behavior at the earliest opportunity. Students with these behaviors may be referred to the Center for Counseling and Student Development or the Dean of Students. You may also make a report through the ECU Cares webpage ([www.ecu.edu/cs-studentlife/dos/onlinereporting.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-studentlife/dos/onlinereporting.cfm)) or calling 252-737-5555.

The Student Safety and Concerns Committee receives reports about students of concern and provides assessment, coordination, and intervention planning to ensure that the students receive appropriate assistance. The SSCC meets weekly and includes representatives from Academic and Student Affairs, faculty, ECU Police, risk management, and the University Attorney.

## Behaviors of Concern

Some students will have behaviors that interfere with their academic or personal success but are not likely to indicate a risk to life and safety. Examples of behaviors of concern might include:

- Frequent class absences
- Difficulty adjusting to college life
- Significant time management/procrastination issues
- Falling asleep in class
- Changes in appearance or personal hygiene
- Uncooperative

**What to do:** Often you can help students exhibiting behaviors of concern by listening, giving basic advice, and making referrals to campus resources to help them. If the student needs more support then you can provide you can make a referral to the Center for Counseling and Student Development (252-328-6661) or to the Dean of Students (252-328-9297). You may also report students of concern ECU Cares at 252-737-5555 or through the ECU Cares website ([www.ecu.edu/cs-studentlife/dos/onlinereporting.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-studentlife/dos/onlinereporting.cfm)). Some students may benefit by referral for academic assistance (i.e. advising, tutoring, or your associate dean).

## Helpful Resources

### Center for Counseling and Student Development

The staff of professionally trained psychologists and counselors provides individual and group counseling and crisis intervention for students experiencing personal or emotional problems. Call 252-328-6661.

### ECU Cares

An online and telephone mechanism to report students whose behavior you are concerned about to the Dean of Students office for further follow-up. You can call 252-737-5555 or go online at [www.ecu.edu/cs-studentlife/dos/onlinereporting.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-studentlife/dos/onlinereporting.cfm).

### ECU Police

ECU Police are the campus first responders who should be notified if you are concerned about imminent danger. The police will also obtain any additional emergency assistance. Call 911 for an emergency or 252-328-6787 for non-emergency consultation.

### Dean of Students

The office of the Dean of Students provides assistance and coordination of services to students, parents, and members of the faculty and staff. The Dean of Students is the chair of the Student Safety and Concerns Committee which provides assessment and coordinates intervention for students of concern. Call 252-328-9297.

### Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities

The Office promotes students' awareness and understanding of their rights and responsibilities as community members and addresses issues of student conduct and academic integrity. Call 252-328-6824. Student Health Services: Provides primary health care services to students. Call 252-328-6841.

### Academic Department Chair/School Director/Dean/Associate Dean

Faculty members should always notify their department chair/school director about students of concern. Unit administrators should be consulted if faculty members are considering use of the Disruptive Academic Behavior policy. Most colleges have an associate dean who can provide assistance with student behavior and academic issues.