

COUNSELING SERVICES

A GUIDE FOR ASSISTING STUDENTS IN NEED



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Office of Counseling Services
Building 700 Room 706
J.F. Drake State Community & Technical College
3421 Meridian Street
Huntsville, AL 35811
Phone: (256)551-1710
Fax: (256) 551-1714

Dear Faculty and Staff,

College can be exciting, stressful, and challenging for many students. Having to face difficult situations or feeling overwhelmed by the pressures of daily life is normal, and is an expected aspect of life. During college, these experiences can negatively impact a student's ability to function well academically. However, when students use resources that are made available to them, the negative impact of the situation may be minimized.

As a faculty or staff member interacting with students, you are in a unique position to identify and help students who are in distress. You are likely to be the first person a student reaches out to for help. Your ability to recognize the signs of a potential issue and to make an initial intervention can have a significant impact on a student's future well-being. In no means is this guide intending or expecting that you act as a professional counselor, but hopefully this information is helpful as you work with students in your role as a faculty or staff member.

The purpose of this guide is to help you recognize some of the signs of students in distress, be supportive to their needs and facilitate appropriate referrals to Counseling Services and other community resources.

The College Counselor is available to help students deal with the following and more:

- Stress/time management
- academic accommodations
- career decisions
- study skills
- academic advising
- mixed or overwhelmed feelings about returning to school
- personal issues
- Referrals to agencies or private practitioners within the community are occasionally recommended, depending upon the nature of the concern.

For more information regarding Counseling Services, please visit the Counseling Services and Disability Support Services webpage at drakestate.edu.

Best Regards,

The Office of Counseling Services



Responding to Student Emergencies

Immediate intervention is needed when a student's behavior poses a threat to self or others, including:

- Suicidal gestures, intentions, or attempts
- Other behavior posing a threat to the student (e.g., hallucinations, drug abuse)
- Threats or aggression directed towards others
- Demonstrated inability to care for oneself

Campus resources for responding to mental health emergencies are:

- Counseling Services (256.551.1710)
- Dean of Instructional and Student Support (256.551.3114)
- Campus Security (256.683.2303)
- Dial 911 for immediate danger

For consultation with the College Counselor, call 256.551.1710 or escort the student to the Counselor's Office in building 700 room 706.

If the student requires immediate medical attention or hospitalization call 911.

If the student is unmanageable (e.g., aggressive, hostile, refusing care) call campus security for assistance. If you are directly threatened by a student or feel at risk, call campus security or SEE CHART BELOW.

WHAT TO DO

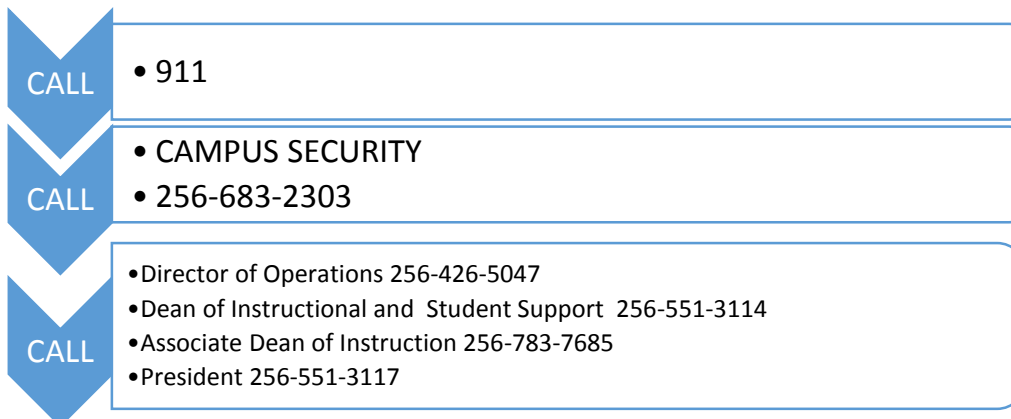
Move student to a quiet and secure place.

Listen attentively, and respond in a straightforward and considerate way.

Enlist the help of a co-worker so that the student isn't left alone and you aren't alone with the student.

Make arrangements for appropriate intervention.

When contacting a campus resource, have available as much information as possible, including your name, the student's name and location; a description of the circumstances and the type of assistance needed; the exact location of the student in the building; and an accurate description of the student.



Diversity Matters

Race, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation, and other dimensions of diversity are important to keep in mind as you help a distressed student. Reactions to racism, sexism, homophobia, disability status, etc., can affect the way in which emotional distress is manifested and also can impact help-seeking behavior. Here are a list of some general barriers to seeking help:

- Denial
- Fear of being labeled in a negative way
- Lack of information about campus resources
- Feelings of being underrepresented among college groups

Communicating support, concern, and understanding is critical in reaching students who may feel isolated and marginalized. Your sensitivity to the unique needs of international students, LGBTQA students, students with disabilities, non-traditional-aged college students, and other underrepresented groups can be important in helping culturally different students get assistance.

RESOURCES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

FIRST GENERATIONAL STUDENTS - (TRIO STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES)

Richard Collie, TRIO Director
256.551.5203
Richard.collie@drakestate.edu

Lisa Vick, Program Assistant
256.551.7279
Lisa.vick@drakestate.edu

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES- (DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES)

Denise Gaymon, Director of Counseling Services
256.551.1710
Denise.gaymon@drakestate.edu

VETERANS- (VETERANS AFFAIRS COORDINATOR)

Neoka Ivey-Hambrick
256.551.3127
Neoka.ivey@drakestate.edu



IDENTIFYING A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

Behavioral Problems

- change in personal hygiene
- dramatic weight gain or loss
- frequently falling asleep in class
- irritability
- unruly behavior
- impaired speech
- disjointed thoughts
- tearfulness
- intense emotion
- inappropriate responses
- difficulty concentrating
- physically harming self
- destruction of property
- anxiety and panic
- inability to communicate clearly
- loss of reality contact (e.g., hallucinations, poor thought connections)

Academic Problems

- career and course indecision
- excessive procrastination

- uncharacteristically poor preparation or performance
- repeated requests for extensions or special considerations
- disruptive classroom behavior
- excessive absence/tardiness
- avoiding or dominating discussions
- references to suicide or harm to others in verbal statements or writing

Interpersonal Problems

- always asking for help with personal problems
- dependency
- hanging around office
- withdrawing
- disruptive behavior
- inability to get along with others
- complaints from other students

SOME SOURCES OF DISTRESS

Relationship problems/break-ups • family problems • grief and loss • divorce • loneliness • academic pressure or failure • serious illness or injury • difficulty adjusting to college life • anxiety • eating disorders • sexual or physical abuse or assault • identity confusion • depression • drug/alcohol abuse • career indecision • loss of goal or dream • low self-esteem • unplanned or undesired pregnancy • language barriers • financial problems

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Faculty and staff play an important role in encouraging students to use campus resources, including facilitating a referral to the Counseling Services, Disability Support Services, and/or other valuable campus resources. Remember to speak directly to students when you sense that they are in academic or personal distress. Openly acknowledge that you are aware of their distress, that you are sincerely concerned about their welfare and that you are willing to help them explore their options. Not all students will be receptive to your help. On the following pages are some specific student issues you may encounter and tips on how you can respond to them.

REFERING STUDENTS

WHEN TO REFER

- If your efforts to manage a significant classroom behavioral issue has not resolved the problem.
- If you are concerned about the welfare of a student, yourself and/or other students.
- If a student asks for help in dealing with personal issues that are outside your role as a faculty or staff member.
- If you have referred the student for assistance in the past and there seems to be no improvement or things seem to be worsening.

GUIDELINES FOR REFERRING STUDENTS TO THE COLLEGE COUNSELOR (FOR NON-EMERGENCY SITUATIONS)

- Let the student know specifically what it is that concerns you.
- Make it clear that your referral represents your best judgment about what would help him or her
- Let the student know what to expect if he/she were to visit the College Counselor
- Let the student know it is his/her right to accept or not accept the referral

IF THE STUDENT AGREES TO THE REFERRAL

- Have the student contact the College Counselor (256-551-1710) to make an appointment or call with the student present.
- You have the option to walk with the student to the Counselor's office (Building 700 Rm# 706).
- It is helpful to inform the College Counselor of your concerns regarding the student either by phone, in person, or in writing.
- If the student is unable to come in on his/her own, call the College Counselor for assistance, or if the student refuses the referral and you are worried about his/her safety, call the College Counselor to consult.
- Remember that discussions between the College Counselor and the student are strictly confidential. No information will be released without consent or reasonable cause.
- It can be helpful to follow-up with the student to let him/her know you are interested in how things are going

If you choose to approach your student with your concerns about his or well-being, you might consider some of the following suggestions (adapted from The George Washington University's Counseling Center).

- **TALK:** to your student in private when both of you have the time and are not rushed or preoccupied. Give your student your undivided attention. It is possible that just a few minutes of effective listening on your part may be enough to help him or her feel cared about as an individual and more confident about what to do. If you have initiated the contact, express your concern in behavioral, nonjudgmental terms. *For example, "You said you've been absent from class lately and I'm*

REFERING STUDENTS (cont.)

concerned," rather than "Why haven't you been going to class? You should be more concerned about your grades."

- **LISTEN:** to thoughts and feelings in a sensitive, non-threatening way. Communicate understanding by repeating back the essence of what your student has told you.
- **GIVE HOPE:** Assure your student that things can get better. It is important to help him or her realize there are options, and that things will not always seem hopeless. Suggest resources: professionals, family, clergy, friends, other campus resources. You may not be able to solve your student's problems yourself, but you can assist him or her receive the help that is needed.
- **AVOID:** judging, evaluating, and criticizing even if your student asks your opinion. Such behavior may push the student away from you and from the help he or she needs. It is important to respect your student's value system, even if you don't agree with it.
- **REFER:** In making a referral it is important to point out that: 1) help is available and 2) seeking such help is a sign of strength and courage rather than a sign of weakness or failure. It may be helpful to point out that seeking professional help for other problems (medical, legal, car problems, etc.) is considered good judgment and an appropriate use of resources. *For example, "If you had a broken arm you would go to a doctor rather than try to set it yourself." If you can, prepare your student for what they might expect if they follow your suggestion. Tell them what you know about the referral person or services.*
- **FOLLOW-UP:** with your student again to solidify his or her resolve to obtain appropriate help and to demonstrate your commitment to assist them in this process. Provide support while your student takes further appropriate action or pursue another referral if needed.

WHAT ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY? The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) does not prohibit the sharing of personal observations and knowledge about a student among campus officials when there is a legitimate concern related to campus safety.

DOES THE REFERRAL NEED THE STUDENT'S PARTICIPATION? Simply put, no it does not. There may be times when the student is not receptive to help or support, or when the student has long left your class or office and the link between your concern and making a referral occurs.

STUDENT BEHAVIORAL CONCERN CHART

MILD	MODERATE	DISTRESSED	CRISIS	SEVERE
Disruptive	Failing School	Alcohol/drug use	Irrational thoughts/fears	Highly disruptive
Failing Grades	Defiance in Rules	Self-destructive behavior	Excessive risk taking	Disjointed thoughts/speech
Poor Performance	Change in hygiene	Depression/anxiety signs	Heightened emotional reactivity	Loss of contact with reality
Absences	Falling asleep in class	Unusual behavior	hostility	Hallucination/paranoia
Difficulty Managing Distress		Pushing the limits of social decorum	Aggression/violence	Stalking
		Suspiciousness	Self-harm/ harm to others (thoughts not actions)	Threats
		Criminal tendencies	Irritability/agitation	Suicidal/homicidal intent
			Memory loss or disorientation	
			Serious crimes	
INTERVENTIONS				
*Faculty/Staff consultation *Student Success Coach *Retention Specialist	* Faculty/Staff consultation * Student Success Coach *Retention Specialist	*Counseling Services Referral *Dean of Instructional and Student Support *Campus Security	* Counseling Services Referral *Dean of Instructional and Student Support *Campus Security *911	* Refer back to responding to student emergencies section. (page 3)

**This list is not comprehensive nor does each behavior need to be present.*

MANDATORY TREATMENT LAWS IN ALABAMA: Alabama has civil commitment laws that establish criteria for determining when involuntary treatment is appropriate for individuals with severe mental illness who cannot seek care voluntarily.

FOR INPATIENT TREATMENT, A PERSON MUST MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- Be a real and present danger to self/others
- Without treatment will continue to suffer mental distress and deterioration of ability to function independently
- Be unable to make a rational and informed decision concerning treatment.

TYPES OF STUDENTS

The Suicidal Students: Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among college students. High-risk indicators include: feelings of hopelessness and futility; a severe loss or threat of loss; a detailed suicide plan; history of a previous attempt; history of alcohol or drug abuse; and feelings of alienation and isolation.

Tips:

- Be available to listen, to talk, to be concerned. Acknowledge that a threat or attempt at suicide is a plea for help.
- Take the student seriously. 80% of those attempting suicide give warning of their intent.
- Walk the student to Counseling Services. Do not leave the student alone. ** If it is after 5:30 p.m., or on the weekend, access Crisis Services of North Alabama 211 or dial 911.
- Care for yourself (Helping someone who is suicidal is hard, demanding and draining work)

The Depressed Student: These students show a multitude of symptoms, which may include guilt, low self-esteem, and feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy. Physical symptoms include decreased or increased appetite, difficulty sleeping and low interest in daily activities. Depressed students often show low activity levels and have little energy. Sometimes depression includes irritation, anxiety and anger. In its most serious form, depression can be accompanied by self-destructive thoughts and intentions as a way to escape from the emotional pain (refer to The Suicidal Student).

Tips:

- Talk to the student in private.
- Listen carefully and validate the student's feelings and experiences
- Be supportive and express your concern about the situation
- Discuss a clear action plan such as making an appointment with the Counseling Services
- Be willing to consider or offer flexible arrangements (e.g., extension on a paper or exam), if appropriate, as a way to alleviate stress and instill hope.
- If you feel overwhelmed or unprepared to help this student, call Counseling Services.

The Anxious Student: Dealing with unexpected events and conflicts are primary causes of anxiety. Unknown and unfamiliar situations raise anxiety. High and unreasonable self-expectations also increase anxiety.

Tips:

- Let them discuss their feelings
- Often, this alone relieves pressure
- Remain calm and reassure students when appropriate
- Be clear and explicit.

The Substance Abusing Student: A variety of substances are available that provide escape from pressing demands. The most abused substance is alcohol. Alcohol and other drug related accidents remain the single-greatest cause of preventable death among college students.

TYPES OF STUDENTS (Cont. 1)

Tips:

- Share your honest concern and encourage the student to seek help
- Be alert for signs of alcohol and drug abuse: preoccupation with drugs, periods of memory loss, deteriorating performance in class
- Get necessary help from Counseling Services.

The Student Who Reports a Sexual Assault: Conservative estimates put the rate of attempted and/or completed sexual assaults for college students at 1 in 6. The nature of sexual assault makes it a humiliating crime, which often makes it very difficult for students to talk about. These students may have difficulties with concentration or motivation, suffer sleep disturbances, have trouble trusting others and may feel highly anxious and/or afraid.

Drake State has a commitment to safety and security and complies with The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Clery Act, both helping bolster response to and prevention of violence. VAWA requires colleges and universities to increase transparency about the scope of sexual violence on campus, guarantee victims enhanced rights, provide for standards in institutional conduct proceedings and provide a campus wide prevention education programming. Please contact operations or Counseling Services for details.

Tips:

- Listen to what they are telling you and believe them.
- Help students to understand that they have many options to consider and that Counseling Services can help them decide what they want to do. An Advocate will not pressure them to do anything they don't want to do
- Encourage them to seek support Counseling Services and Dean of Instructional and Student Support.

The Demanding Student: Typically, the utmost time and energy given to these students will not seem like enough from the student's perspective. They often seek to control your time and unconsciously believe the amount of time received is a reflection of their worth.

Tips:

- Let them know the limits of what it is reasonable for you to provide
- Let them make their own decisions as much as possible
- When you have given appropriate time to them, let them know, "Excuse me, I need to attend to other things right now".)

The Student Who Reports Having a Disability: Students with documentation of a physical, learning or a psychiatric disability are eligible to access accommodations through the Disability Support Services (DSS)(Contact Counseling Services or visit the webpage:

http://www.drakestate.edu/student_services/students_with_special_needs.aspx)

Tips:

- Speak to the student in private about your concerns

TYPES OF STUDENTS (Cont. 2)

- Treat each student with sensitivity and respect
- Maintain confidentiality about their disability
- Acknowledge the difficulties that the student is having
- Be open to follow-up consultation with DSS regarding accommodations for the student
- Remember that any student requesting accommodations must present a letter of from DSS, which will include recommended actions.
- Set rules and parameters for all students in your classes; accommodation is not absence of academic expectations. Consult the DSS Resource Guide and Counseling Services Manual on DSS website or contact the office by phone or email.
- Don't assume the student understands the academic limitations imposed by the disability

The Verbally Aggressive Student: Students usually become verbally abusive when in frustrating situations which they see as being beyond their control. Anger and frustration become displaced from those situations to you. Typically the anger is not directed at you personally. These students often feel they will be rejected and, therefore, reject you before you reject them.

Tips:

- Acknowledge their anger
- Rephrase what they are saying and identify their emotions
- Allow them to ventilate, get the feelings out, and tell you what is upsetting to them
- Tell them you are not willing to accept their verbally abuse behavior
- Help the person problem solve and deal with the real issues when they become calmer
- Defuse & de-escalate the situation by remaining calm, speaking in a calm tone of voice, and modeling appropriate behavior to the student.

The Violent or Physically Destructive Student: Violence due to emotional distress is very rare. It typically occurs only when the student is totally frustrated and feels totally unable to do anything about it.

Tips:

- Prevent total frustration and helplessness by quickly and calmly acknowledging the intensity of the situation
- Explain clearly and directly what behaviors are acceptable
- Stay in an open area.
- When all else fails, divert attention.
- Get necessary help - other staff, and call security



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Mental Health:

Crisis Services <http://www.csna.org/>

Half of Us <http://www.halfofus.com/>

National Institute of Mental Health <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

National Alliance on Mental Illness <https://www.nami.org/> and NAMI Huntsville <http://www.namihuntsville.org/>

Psych Central <http://psychcentral.com/>

Test your stress quiz: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-smarts.aspx>

Suicide:

Crisis Services <http://www.csna.org/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

Domestic and Sexual Violence:

Crisis Services <http://www.csna.org/>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center <http://www.nsvrc.org/>

National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence <http://www.ncdsv.org/>

RAINN (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network) <http://www.rainn.org/>

National Domestic Violence Hotline <http://www.thehotline.org/> national council on alcoholism and drug dependence, <https://www.ncadd.org>, <http://drugabuse.com/>

Hotline #: 1800-799-SAFE (7233)

Drug Abuse:

Above the influence <http://abovetheinfluence.com/>

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: Rethinking Drinking <http://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>

Addiction Resource <https://addictionresource.com/>

RESOURCES (Cont.)

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) <http://www.samhsa.gov/>

Alabama Quit now <https://alabama.quitlogix.org/>

Eating Disorder:

National Eating Disorder Association <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/>

LGBTQA:

The Trevor Project <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

The National GLBT Hotline - 1.888.THE.GLNH (843.4564)

Free2Be <http://free2be.org/>

Veterans:

The Soldiers Project <https://www.thesoldiersproject.org/>

Veteran's Families <http://www.veteransandfamilies.org/>

National Center for PTSD Resources <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/index.asp>

National Suicide Prevention Hotline - Veteran's Hotline: 1.800.273.TALK (Veterans press 1)

Other

Go Ask Alice <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/>

Healthfinder <http://healthfinder.gov/>

Virtual Pamphlet Collection:

An extensive collection of mental health informational pamphlets

<http://www.dr-bob.org/vpc/virtulets.html>

The information in this guide was adapted from the following institutions:

University of Texas at Austin

College of Charleston's Counseling Service

University of South Florida

The George Washington University Counseling Center

