Students in Distress Guide

Division of Student Affairs

fau.edu/studentsindistress

A Message to Faculty, Staff, & Students

The university experience looks and feels different for many students who embark on this journey. Supporting students is the responsibility of the university community. It is likely that faculty, staff, or other students will be in the best position to recognize the distress of a student. Faculty, staff and students can act as a bridge between a student in need of support and the resources that may assist the student.

This guide informs faculty, staff and students how to **recognize** signs of distress, provides tips on how to **respond** to distressed students' observations and their concerns, and provides **referrals** which enable faculty, staff and students to determine who to contact. The type and amount of distress the student is experiencing will require different actions and resources.

Safety First: If a person's conduct is clearly dangerous or threatening, including self-harm or harm to others, call 911.

RECOGNIZE

Safety Risk

- References of threat to self or others (e.g, suicide, self-injury, homicide, assault, violence)
- Physical Violence
- Communication with themes of self-injure, violence, despair, helplessness
- Stalking or harassing

Academic

- Decreased academic performance
- Consistently late or missing class
- Strong emotional reaction to mistakes
- Anxious or on edge

Physical

- Change in appearance
- Appears tired or has disturbances in sleep
- Intoxication
- Signs of injury
- Frequent illness
- Headaches or muscle tension

Behavioral

- Disclosure of distress
- Uncontrolled crying, worry, or panic
- Angry, irritable, aggressive
- Reports of addiction or poor coping skills (e.g., eating disorder, substance misuse, gambling, gaming)
- Easily distracted or scattered
- Disoriented
- Hearing, seeing or responding to things others don't observe

RESPOND

Be Steady

- Be aware of own reactions
- Take a breath if you feel overwhelmed or anxious
- Use the experts
- Seek consultation during and after if needed

Check in, Listen, Validate

- Give your full attention
- Be specific and detailed about what you have noticed
- Communicate that you hear their experiences, thoughts & feelings
- Listen and reflect what you heard, using their words

Gather Information

- Ask what they need or are hopeful for
- Get clarification if you don't understand
- Ask what steps they have taken to manage stress
- If you have concerns about safety, ask directly about thoughts of suicide

Discuss Referrals/ Next Steps

- If immediate action is not necessary, use **refer** section
- Help student make the first step
- If student is hesitant about getting help, provide resources
- Consult with CAPS if you are unsure of level of urgency

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REFER

Does the student need immediate assistance, or do they pose an immediate threat to themselves or others?

YES: Emergency

EXAMPLES:

- Shares intention to end own life
- A suicide attempt has been made or plans to attempt in immediate future
- Threats directed towards another individual or the community
- Disoriented, unconscious or unresponsive
- Behavior is dangerous, uncontrollable, abusive, or threatening

STEP 1: IMMEDIATELY call 911

STEP 2: Submit a report via the university's online report page as soon as the situation has been managed, and you are able to enter the information: **fau.edu/report**

NOT SURE: Crisis

EXAMPLES:

- Statements suggesting suicidal thoughts or harm to self, but no immediate plan is expression (e.g., "I won't be around to see this", "it has been nice knowing you")
- Student is distraught and can't be calmed
- Marked and sudden change in mood or behavior
- Irrational or incoherent thoughts, statements or behaviors

STEP 1: Immediately connect student with CAPS. Stay with the student and walk them to CAPS (SS8- Rm 229; 2nd floor of Breezeway above the Food Court) or call CAPS. If the incident occurs after hours call CAPS on-call crisis service.

STEP 2: university's online report page: **fau.edu/report**

NO: Concern

EXAMPLES:

- Tearful or upset, but able to be calmed
- Reports of depression or anxiety
- Difficulties sleeping
- Inadequate food or housing
- Academic stressors
- Loss of family member or friend
- Unexpected absences from class impacting school
- Social isolation or marginalization
- Financial barriers

As much as you and the student are comfortable, listen and provide support, but **DO NOT act as the student's counselor.**

STEP 1: Refer student to appropriate campus resources based on student concerns. **fau.edu/studentresources** If you need assistance in determining the appropriate resource(s), or about how to refer, contact CAPS (mental health) DOS (other resources).

STEP 2: If the problem remains unresolved, or the student could benefit from coordinated campus response, submit a report via the university's online report page: **fau.edu/report**

FAU Report

fau.edu/report

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Title IX and Reporting

- Require FAU take mandatory steps when responding to sexual harassment incidents it has actual knowledge about. The steps include notifying individuals impacted by sexual harassment about options they may find helpful.
- Any supervisory employee or other official who has authority to institute corrective measures on behalf of the University who receives a report, observes or learns of an alleged violation of University Regulation 7.008 has a duty to promptly report the conduct to OCR9.

STEP 1: Provide Care

a. Explain your confidentiality limitations (i.e., let the student know you must report the incident).

b. If a student decides to share information, allow them to decide what they want to share. Do not inquire or try to elicit information.

c. Use statements such as:
- "How can I support you?"
- "Can I connect you with any resources?"

d. Offer campus support services. You can direct the student to Victim Services at the 24-hour number 561-297-0500 (ask for an advocate).

STEP 2: Connect Student to Campus Resources

a. FAU Victim Services, FAU CAPS, FAU Dean of Students, FAU Police, FAU Office of Civil Rights and Title IX, and FAU SHS.

b. If students want to speak with someone confidentially, refer the student to FAU CAPS.

c. FAU CAPS and FAU SHS are not required to report identifiable information about a sexual misconduct incident.

STEP 3: Report

a. Report the incident via online reporting form: **fau.edu/report** Select Sexual Misconduct/Title IX for the reporting form.

b. If you have questions after filling out the reporting form, contact the OCR9 office at 561-297-3004.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

FAU CAPS (24/7)	(561) 297-2277
FAU DOS	(561) 297-3542
FAU Police	911 or (561) 297-3500
FAU Victim Services	(561) 297-0500
FAU OCR9	(561) 297-3004

FAU Report

fau.edu/report