

# ASSISTING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

SEE SOMETHING. SAY SOMETHING. DO SOMETHING.



UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND

## SEE SOMETHING

UMD faculty and staff are in a unique position to recognize and demonstrate compassion for UMD students in distress.

Students may feel **alone**, **isolated**, and even **hopeless** when faced with challenges in their academic and personal lives. These feelings can disrupt academic performance and lead to dysfunctional coping and other serious consequences.

**You may be the first person to SEE SOMETHING distressing in a student** if you have frequent and prolonged contact with them. As members of the UMD community, it is important that we act with compassion.

## 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.

This document can help you recognize symptoms of student distress and identify appropriate referrals to campus resources.

## SAY SOMETHING

Students exhibiting troubling behaviors in your presence are likely having difficulties in other areas of their lives, including the classroom, with roommates, with family, and even in social settings.

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

## WHAT ABOUT PRIVACY?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits communication about a student of concern in connection with a health and safety emergency. Observations of a student's conduct or statements made by a student are not protected by FERPA.

Appropriate consideration for student privacy should be given before information is shared with people other than those suggested in this document and questions about when such disclosure is appropriate can be answered by University Office of General Counsel. Faculty and graduate assistants are Responsible University Employees (see [OCRSM.UMD.EDU](http://OCRSM.UMD.EDU)).

## INDICATORS OF DISTRESS

Use the following chart to identify a student in distress. Look for patterns, frequency, duration and severity.

### ACADEMIC

- Sudden decline in quality of work and grades
- Repeated absences
- Disorganized performance
- Multiple requests for extensions
- Overly demanding of faculty or staff time and attention
- Bizarre content in writings or presentations
- You find yourself providing more personal than academic support

### PHYSICAL

- Marked changes in physical appearance (e.g., grooming, hygiene, weight loss/gain)
- Excessive fatigue or sleep disturbance
- Intoxication, hangovers, or smelling of alcohol
- Disoriented or "out of it"
- Garbled, tangential, disconnected, or slurred speech
- Behavior is out of context, disruptive, or bizarre

### PSYCHOLOGICAL

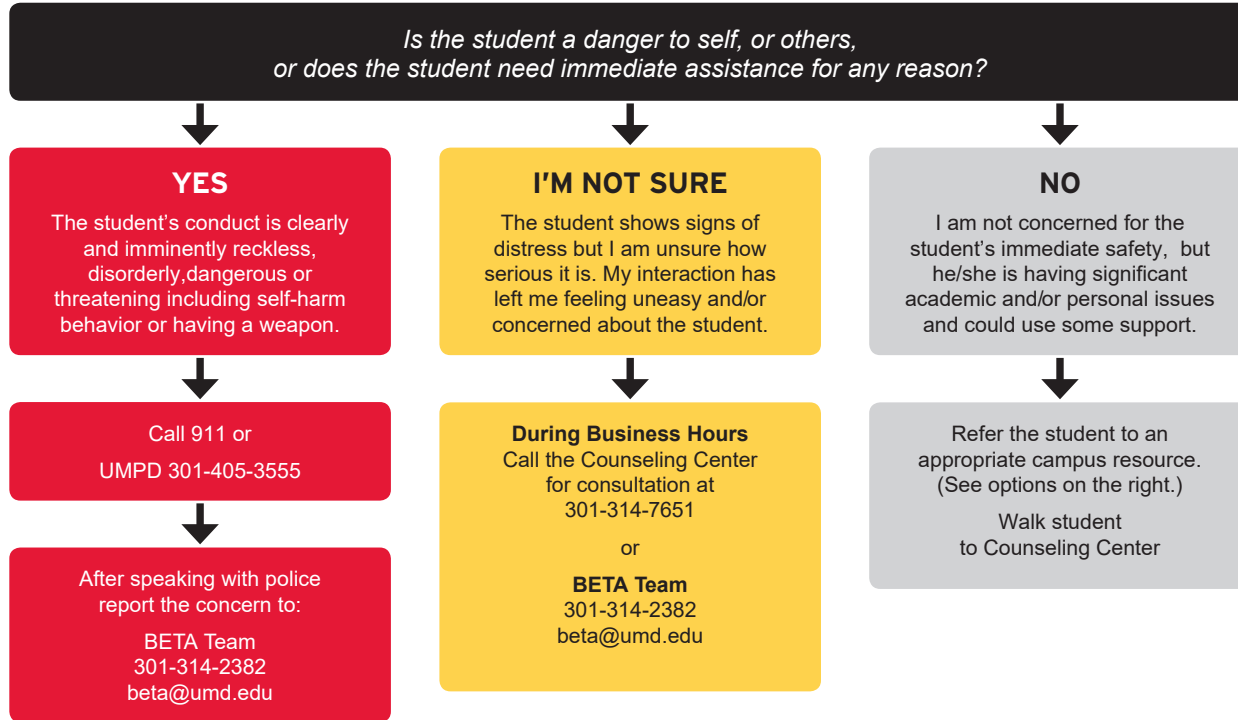
- Self-disclosure of personal distress (e.g., family or financial problems, grief, suicidal thoughts)
- Unusual or disproportionate emotional response to events
- Excessive tearfulness or panic reactions
- Irritability or unusual apathy
- Verbal abuse (e.g., taunting, badgering, intimidation)
- Concern from peers
- Delusions and paranoia

### SAFETY RISK

- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Physical violence (e.g., shoving, grabbing, assault, display of weapons)
- Implying or making threat to harm self or others
- Academic assignments dominated by themes of hopelessness, rage, worthlessness, isolation, despair, acting out, suicidal ideations, violent behaviors
- Stalking or harassing

## RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Follow the chart to determine who to contact when faced with a distressed or distressing student.



## TIPS

### PREPARING TO REACH OUT

- Know the available campus resources and the referral process.
- Review information on privacy rules.
- If safe, meet privately and always allow sufficient time to meet.
- Ensure your safety.
- If you decide not to have direct contact with the student, refer the incident to your college dean. It is best if you can have conversation with student.
- Contact UMPD if a student expresses a direct threat to self or others, or acts in a bizarre, highly irrational and disruptive way.

### CONNECTING WITH THE STUDENT

- Clearly express your concerns, focusing on the behavior in nondisparaging terms.
- Allow the student to talk.
- Do not challenge or become argumentative with the student.
- Ask directly if the student wants to hurt themselves or others.
- Respect the student's privacy without making false promises of confidentiality.
- Document all incidents and attempts to resolve the situation.

### MAKING THE REFERRAL

- Recommend services and provide direct referrals; assist student in contacting resources.
- Frame any decision to seek and accept help as an intelligent choice.
- Make sure the student understands what actions are necessary.
- Be frank with the student about your limits (e.g., time, expertise).
- Encourage and assist the student to make and keep an appointment and set a follow-up meeting with the student.

## RESOURCES

### ON CAMPUS

Dean of Students Office	301-314-8484
BETA Team	301-314-2382
University Health Center	301-314-8184
Counseling Center	301-314-7651
Faculty Staff Assistance Program	301-314-8170
Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct	301-405-1142
Office of Student Conduct	301-314-8204
Accessibility & Disability Service	301-314-7682
CARE To Stop Violence	301-314-2222
Hate-Bias Response Team	301-405-2838
University Chaplains	301-314-9866
Student Legal Aid Office	301-314-7756
Veteran Student Life	301-314-0073
UMD Police Department	301-405-3555

### IN THE COMMUNITY

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline	988
The Trevor Project	866-488-7386
National Hopeline Network	800-784-2433

### TRAININGS/LINKS

T.E.R.P.S for Terps Training	<a href="http://www.counseling.umd.edu">www.counseling.umd.edu</a>
Mental Health First Aid Training	<a href="http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org">www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org</a>
Suicide Prevention Lifeline	<a href="http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org">www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org</a>
Undergraduate Advising Reps	<a href="http://www.ugst.umd.edu/car">www.ugst.umd.edu/car</a>
Title IX/OCRSM Training	<a href="http://www.ocrsm.umd.edu">www.ocrsm.umd.edu</a>