

# IDENTIFYING, RESPONDING, AND REFERRING STUDENTS OF CONCERN

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY  
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# GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTION/INTERVENTION

We encourage you, whenever possible, to speak directly and honestly to a student when you sense that he/she is in academic and/or personal distress.

Openly acknowledge to students that you are:

- Aware of their distress
- Sincerely concerned about their welfare
- Willing to help them explore their alternatives

# GUIDELINES (cont.)

- REQUEST TO SEE THE STUDENT IN PRIVATE – This may help minimize embarrassment and defensiveness.
- BRIEFLY acknowledge your observations and perceptions of their situation. Express your concerns directly and honestly.
- LISTEN carefully and try to see the issues from the student's point of view without necessarily agreeing or disagreeing.

# GUIDELINES (cont.)

- **ATTEMPT** to identify the problem. You can help by exploring alternatives to deal with the concern.
- **INAPPROPRIATE** and strange behavior should not be ignored. Comment on what you have observed, but not in a judgmental way.
- **FLEXIBILITY** with strict procedures may allow an alienated student to respond more effectively to your concerns.

# GUIDELINES (cont.)

- INVOLVE yourself only as far as you want to go. At times, in an attempt to reach or help a troubled student, you may become more involved than time or skill permits.

# The Depressed Student

Look for a pattern of these indicators:

- Mood changes: sadness/crying, irritability/anger, anxiety, numbness, hopeless or helpless...
- Academic changes: Markedly diminished performance; reduced class attendance
- Lack of energy/motivation
- Impaired memory and concentration
- Deterioration in personal hygiene
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Excessive or insufficient sleep
- Alcohol or drug use

# Working with the Depressed Student

## DO:

- Let the student know you are aware and you would like to help
- Reach out more than halfway and encourage the student to discuss how she/he is feeling
- Offer options to further investigate/manage the symptoms of depression (e.g., you can walk student to Counseling & Psych Serv.)

# Depressed Student (cont.)

## DON'T:

- Minimize the student's feelings  
("everything will be better tomorrow")
- Bombard the student with "fix it" solutions or advice
- Be afraid to ask whether the student is suicidal if you think she/he may be

# Where to Refer the Depressed Student?

## ➤ Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS):

- Walk student to CAPS if appropriate and student is willing (call CAPS to inform them you are bringing student to center)
- Have student call CAPS from your office to schedule an appointment

## ➤ If student unwilling to contact CAPS:

- Refer to Vincent Feliz in Dean of Students Office (call first to make sure Vincent is available or to schedule an appointment)

# The Suicidal Student Indicators

- Risk factors such as:
  - Depression (see signs/symptoms above)
  - Recent trauma or loss (including a break-up)
  - Emergence of signif. Health/MH disturbance
- Withdrawal from friends, family, or society (including reduced class attendance)
- Expresses hopelessness or guilt
- Dramatic mood or behavior changes
- Threatening self-harm or suicide; expressing that life isn't worth the trouble; increased interest in death
- Also... Increased AOD use, giving possessions away, engaging in risky behaviors, rage / talk of revenge, seeking access to means...

# Suicidal Student Indicators (Cont)

Four areas to assess the likelihood of an attempt to take their life:

- Do they have a well-developed plan that includes an easily available method?
- Have they attempted before?
- Has a friend, family member or acquaintance taken their life through suicide?
- Do they use substances such as alcohol and other depressants that can weaken impulse control and numb pain?

# The Suicidal Student

## DO:

- Talk about suicide openly and directly
  - Focus on your observations
  - Avoid any negative judgment
  - Ask about AOD use + any previous attempts
- Be confident, caring and know the resources
- Take charge and bring the student to Counseling & Psychological Services
  - If student is actively suicidal call 9-1-1 instead
- Listen to the small voice inside that says, “something isn’t right with this student”

# Suicidal Student (cont.)

## DON'T:

- Get overly involved with the student (beyond your abilities and capacities)
- Ignore comments like, “I won’t be a problem much longer” or “nothing matters; it’s no use”
- Be too busy to intervene
- Make promises of confidentiality
- Leave an actively suicidal student alone

# Where to Refer Suicidal Students

- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):
  - Call CAPS to inform them that you are walking over a student
  - Walk student to CAPS
- If student actively suicidal:
  - CALL 911

# The Angry & Aggressive Student

- Students usually become verbally abusive in frustrating situations they perceive as being beyond their control.
- Anger and upset become displaced from those situations onto the nearest target (YOU).
- Explosive outbursts or ongoing belligerent, hostile behavior become the student's way of gaining power and control. It is important to remember that, for the most part, the student is not angry at you personally, but at his/her world and you are the object of pent-up frustrations.

# The Angry & Aggressive Student

## DO:

- Acknowledge their anger and frustration (e.g., “I hear how angry you are”)
- Rephrase what they are saying and identify their emotion (e.g., “I can hear how upset you are and nobody will listen”)
- Reduce stimulation; invite the person to a quiet place if this is comfortable
- Be direct and firm about behaviors you will accept (e.g., “I need for you to step back,” “I’m having a hard time hearing you when you yell”)
- Allow them to ventilate, get the feelings out, and tell you what is upsetting them

# Angry & Aggressive Student (cont.)

## DON'T:

- Ignore warning signs (body language, clenched fists)
- Get into an argument or shouting match
- Become hostile or punitive yourself (e.g., “You can’t talk to me that way”)
- Press for explanations for their behavior
- Make threats or dares
- Continue engaging the student if s/he becomes physically aggressive

# Where to Refer Angry & Aggressive Student

- Dean of Students Office (DOS) if you are unable to resolve the issue with the student
  - Call Dean of Students Office to make sure that someone is available or to schedule an appointment for the student
  - File an on-line report (link on Student Rights and Responsibilities web site) referring student to Dean of Students Office and inform student you are making the referral and that someone from the DOS will contact them

# The Student Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs

- Alcohol is the most widely used psychoactive drug.
- It is common to find students who abuse alcohol also abusing other drugs, both prescription and illicit.
- Adverse affects include: hangovers, hospitalization for alcohol overdose, poor academic performance, missing classes, injury, and unprotected sexual activity.

# The Student Under the Influence of Drugs or Alcohol

DO:

- Confront the student with the behavior that is of concern
- Address the substance abuse issue if the student is open and willing
- Offer support and concern for the student's overall well-being
- Suggest that the student talk with someone about these issues and maintain contact with the student after a referral is made

# Student Under the Influence of Drugs or Alcohol (cont.)

## DON'T:

- Convey judgment or criticism about the student's substance abuse
- Make allowances for the student's irresponsible behavior
- Ignore signs of intoxication in the classroom or office

# Where to Refer Student Under the Influence of AOD

- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) for assessment and support
- Dean of Students Office for referral to resources for assessment and support
- IF STUDENT HIGHLY INTOXICATED, CALL UNIVERSITY POLICE TO ENSURE THAT STUDENT DOES NOT GET INTO A VEHICLE AND DRIVE

# Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom or Department Office

## Faculty and Staff Authority & Responsibility:

- Establish classroom rules or expectations for behavior in the office
- Maintain order
- Eject student from the course or office temporarily for violation of the rules or misconduct (i.e., non-threatening, annoying conduct)
- Meet w/student during office hours or schedule an appointment and put the student on notice that the behavior is disruptive and that any further behavior of this type will result in a referral to the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities (confirm notice in writing after conference)

## Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom or Department Office (cont.)

- If you are uncomfortable speaking to the student alone, ask the department chair to sit in. If the disruption occurs in a department office, the program director or coordinator should meet with the student.
- IF THE STUDENT IS THREATENING, IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO HOLD A CONFERENCE; CALL UNIVERSITY POLICE. UNIVERSITY POLICE WILL INVOLVE APPROPRIATE STUDENT AFFAIRS PERSONNEL

# Other Matters to Refer to DOS or Student Rights & Responsibilities

- Extended absences from campus due to medical or other personal emergencies
- Missing student who has not responded to emails or phone calls
  - Call UPD, Dean of Students Office/Student Rights & Responsibilities
- For identifying off-campus resources (e.g., shelter, social services, other health services, legal services, etc.)

# Referrals regarding Discrimination

- Title IX Discrimination Complaints include:
  - Sexual harassment, including
    - sexual assault
    - intimate/domestic partner violence
    - dating violence
    - stalking
  - Age, Disability, Gender, Genetic Information, Nationality, Race or Ethnicity, Religion, Sexual Orientation, and Veteran or Military Status.

# Report Discrimination to:

- Colleen Mullery, AVP for APS & HR and campus Title IX Coordinator, when accused is faculty, staff or administrator
- Randi Darnall Burke, Dean of Students and campus Title IX Deputy Coordinator, when accused is student
- NOTE: IF STUDENT APPEARS TO BE INTIMIDATED BY GOING TO APS & HR, REFER TO RANDI

# Referrals to Dean of Students, Student Rights & Responsibilities

- Document the incident in writing: Who, What, Where, When—Why (if you know)
- Include names and identities of witnesses
- Include how the interaction made you or others feel
- Send documentation electronically via the [on-line incident report and response form](#) (see Student Rights & Responsibilities website)
- DO NOT record personal opinions or “armchair” diagnoses

REMEMBER: ALL DOCUMENTATION IS DISCOVERABLE AND THE STUDENT HAS THE RIGHT TO ACCESS ALL DOCUMENTS THAT CONTAIN HIS/HER NAME

# CONSULTATION & REFERENCE PHONE NUMBERS

## On-campus resources:

- Counseling & Psych Services x3236
- Dean of Students Office x3504
- Office of Student Rights &  
Responsibilities x3504
- University Police (business) x5555
- EMERGENCY 911

# CONSULTATION & REFERENCE PHONE NUMBERS (CONT.)

## Off-campus resources:

- County Mental Health  
24-hr crisis line 445-7715
- Humboldt Domestic Violence Serv.  
24-hr crisis line 443-6042
- Northcoast Rape Crisis Team  
24-hr crisis line 445-2881

# CSU Red Folder

- Designed to help faculty and staff identify, respond to, and refer students in distress
- Reference guide that contains safety tips and contact information for a wide variety of emergency campus resources
- Available as a desktop icon, paper copy, and mobile application for smartphones