

The CVM Distressed Student Protocol

At one time or another, everyone experiences stress, anxiety, depression and discomfort. Although it's not unusual to feel anxious, sad, overwhelmed, or confused during the academic year, these feelings become significant when they are recurrent, extreme, and impair one's every day functioning. This level of distress inhibits students from performing their daily tasks (in the classroom or on rotations) and in turn can put both their personal health and patient care at risk. Below are some things to be on the lookout for when working with students:

Recognizing Emotional Distress

- Depressed mood: Reduced participation; inflated or manic mood (being excessively active and talkative, easily distracted, pressured speech, racing thoughts); swollen, red eyes; marked changes in personal hygiene; falling asleep in class or on rotations, and/or apathy. Students may also become agitated, may snap at others, have a low frustration tolerance and may cry easily.
- Inability to communicate clearly: garbled, slurred, disjointed, vacant, slowed or incoherent speech.
- Loss of contact with reality: seeing/hearing things that are not there; beliefs or actions greatly at odds with reality or probability.
- **Overtly talking or hinting at suicidal thoughts or intentions (referring to suicide as a current and viable option). This may be very prevalent when students are constantly faced with difficult patients and clients or work on a rotation where death and animal euthanasia is common.**
- Highly disruptive behavior: hostile, threatening, violent; withdrawal into the corner of the room or a fetal position.
- Homicidal threats.

Although the following characteristics are less severe, they may also indicate emotional distress. These behaviors can lead to those listed above unless some type of intervention is implemented, i.e. refer to counseling, take a personal day, and/or checking in with the student.

- Repeated requests for special consideration, such as deadline extensions, especially if the student appears uncomfortable or highly emotional disclosing the circumstances prompting the request; the student divulges a lot of information and there is a noticeable change in affect, i.e. crying.
- Behavior that pushes the limits of decorum and interferes with the effective management of the environment.
- Unusual or exaggerated emotional responses.
- Withdrawal from activities or friends; student may also seem disengaged or absent.
- Significant changes in sleep or eating patterns; too much or too little.
- Serious grade problems or a change from consistently getting good grades to unaccountable poor performance.
- Excessive absences, especially if the student had previously demonstrated consistent class attendance.

- Perfectionism, procrastination, or excessive worrying
- Markedly changed patterns of interaction (totally avoiding participation, excessive anxiety when called upon, dominating discussions)

If you believe that any of your students may be exhibiting these behavioral signs, please follow this protocol to ensure they get the help they need in a timely manner:

Encountering a distressed student during non-business hours (Monday through Friday- 5 pm to 8 am or on Saturday-Sunday):

1. If you believe the student is at immediate risk (says they are going to harm/kill someone or themselves) please call Oregon State police (On Campus) 541-737-7000 or extension 7-7000. If you are off site or unsure who to call please 911.
2. As a faculty or staff member, you can also get a consult with CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) by calling 541-737-2131. This is a 24/7 on-call number where you will speak with a mental health professional. This may be the most helpful route if you are curious about tips or what to do with a student who seems distressed.

Encountering a distressed student during business hours (Monday through Friday):

1. Please contact the Dean's office and speak to either Dr. Stacy Semevolos or Dr. Susan Tornquist directly at 541-737-2098 or via e-mail.
2. You may also contact Dr. Alex Rowell at 541-737-2131 or e-mail him; he will answer your call or e-mail as soon as possible.
3. If you are unable to get in contact with any of the three individuals listed above, please call Jolene Bunce at 541-737-2268.
4. You may also walk a student over to CAPS for a triage consult during normal business hours (usually 8:30-4:30 pm M-F); CAPS is located in Snell Hall 5th floor (Located near the Kerr building and the main campus library).

Other OSU Resources:

- Faculty or staff may contact the Student Care Team at (541) 737-8748, option #3, the Student Care Inquiry Form, or deanofstudents@oregonstate.edu.
- For human medical needs/emergencies you can contact Student Health Services on campus at 541-737-2724 (during clinic hours) or for after hour services call 541-737-9355.
- Benton county Mental Health can be reached by calling 541-766-6835.