Working with Disruptive Individuals

WHAT IS DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR?
Behavior that interferes with other students, faculty, or staff and their access to an appropriate educational or work environment is considered disruptive. These behaviors are usually a violation of the Code of Student Life. For more information about the Code of Student Life, please visit the website: http://uncw.edu/counseling

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR?
• Yelling or screaming
• Persistent and unreasonable demands for time and attention
• Words or actions that have the effect of intimidating or harassing another
• Words or actions that cause another to fear for his/her personal safety
• Threats of physical assault

THE DOs
• DO allow the person to vent and tell you what is upsetting him/her. Use silence to allow the person to talk it out.
• DO acknowledge the feelings of the individual.
• DO set limits. Explain clearly and directly what behaviors are acceptable: “I will be willing to speak with you as soon as you lower your voice.”
• DO be firm, consistent, and honest.
• DO focus on what you can do to help resolve the situation.
• DO offer to make referrals. When possible, give the name of an individual who might be able to help.
• DO ask the student to leave the room if disruptive behavior persists.
• DO report the behavior to the Office of the Dean of Students and/or the University Police (UPD).
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THE DON'Ts
• DON'T interrupt, particularly during the first 20-30 seconds of peak anger.
• DON'T minimize the situation.
• DON'T get into an argument or shouting match.
• DON'T blame, ridicule, or use sarcasm.
• DON'T touch the individual.
• DON'T ignore safety issues if the person is becoming more agitated.
• DON'T assume you can resolve all situations; call for assistance when needed.

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF DISTRESS
• Marked change in academic performance or other behavior
• Excessive absence or tardiness
• Exaggerated emotional response that is obviously inappropriate to the situation
• Feelings of depression or hopelessness
• Hyperactivity or very rapid speech
• Marked change in personal hygiene and/or attire
• Excessive confusion
• Dependency (individual hangs around or makes excessive appointments to see you)
• Strange or bizarre behavior indicating loss of contact with reality
• Verbal or written references to suicide
• Verbal or written references to homicide or assaultive behavior
• Isolation from friends, family, or classmates

WHAT IS MY ROLE?
As a staff or faculty member, you are in a good position to spot someone who may be emotionally distressed. While some stress is expected, especially during peak times of the year, you may notice someone acting in a way that is inconsistent with your normal experience with that person. You may be able to serve as a resource in times of trouble. Your expressions of interest and concern may be critical factors in getting the individual to seek appropriate help. You may also be able to alert UNCW staff so that an appropriate intervention can be made.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “DISTRESS”?
Sometimes students exhibit behavior that may be worrisome and may indicate that they are coping with a serious mental health problem. Mental health issues can alter the content of students’ communication and/or their behavior in the classroom. For example, an otherwise academically successful student may become withdrawn, depressed, and potentially suicidal. The depression may lead to poor grades, lack of attention in class, and other similar behaviors.

THE DON'Ts
• DON'T promise confidentiality.
• DON'T judge or criticize.
• DON'T ignore unusual behavior.
• DON'T make the problem your own.
• DON'T involve yourself beyond the limits of your time or skill.

RESOURCES
University Police (UPD).................962-2222
http://uncw.edu/police
Office of the Dean of Students / Student Affairs Case Manager........962-3119
http://uncw.edu/odos
Counseling Center..........................962-3746
http://uncw.edu/counseling

Working with Distressed Individuals

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• Isolation from friends, family, or classmates

THE DOs
• DO speak with the student privately.
• DO let him/her know you are concerned about his/her welfare.
• DO express your concern in behavioral, non-judgmental terms.
• DO tell him/her you are willing to help.
• DO listen carefully to what he/she is describing.
• DO help him/her explore options.
• DO make referrals to the appropriate campus department.
• DO point out that help is available and seeking such help is a sign of strength and courage rather than of weakness or failure.
• DO maintain clear and consistent boundaries and expectations.
• DO recognize your limits
• DO document the interaction or incident.
• DO consult with the Counseling Center and the Office of the Dean of Students.

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MAKING REFERRALS AT UNCW:

IF THE STUDENT IS IN CRISIS (AT RISK TO HARM SELF OR OTHERS):
• Contact the Counseling Center at 962-3746

IF THE STUDENT IS NOT AT RISK TO HARM SELF OR OTHERS:
• Suggest in a caring manner that he/she may benefit from a meeting with a counselor from the Counseling Center. Consider walking the student to the Counseling Center.
• Counseling does not impact or influence academic records.
• Counseling sessions are free to registered UNCW students.
• Counseling is confidential.

HELPFUL UNCW RESOURCES:
Counseling Center ................................................................. 962-3746
Student Health Center ......................................................... 962-3280
Office of the Dean of Students and Case Manager .............. 962-3119
Disability Services ................................................................. 962-7555
University Learning Center .................................................. 962-7857
Veterns Services ................................................................ 962-3177
Office of International Programs ......................................... 962-3685
CARE Intermensal Violence Prevention & Response .......... 962-2273
After Hours Crisis Response for dating abuse, sexual assault & stalking ....................................................... 512-4821
CROSSROADS – (Alcohol/Drug Abuse) .................................. 962-4136

HELPFUL EXTERNAL RESOURCES:
Cape Fear Hospital Emergency Dept. ................................. 910-343-0703
Coastal Horizons Center, Inc. .............................................. 24 Hour Access Below)
Toll Free Hotline ................................................................. 1-800-672-2903
Domestic Violence Shelters ans Services (24 Hours) ........... 910-343-0703
Emergency Youth Shelter .................................................. 962-7408
Rape Crisis Center ................................................................. 962-7408
Crisis Intervention ............................................................... 962-6936
National Suicide Prevention Line ........................................ 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

STUDENT BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION TEAM (SBIT)
The Student Behavioral Intervention Team was formed to:
• address reports of troubling (inappropriate, disruptive, or harmful) patterns of student behavior
• recommend proactive and non-punitive approaches to help students obtain resources which may enable them to remain focused on health and achieving success
• minimize negative impacts on the student’s and their peers’ overall academic experience
• Identify students who may pose a threat to harm self or others.

After collective consultation, the team makes recommendations for action including referral to internal and external resources or temporary separation from UNCW. Student recommendations and the resolution of troubling and disruptive behavior are always governed by a course of action that balances the best interest of the student with those of the UNCW community.

The cross-functional SBIT team includes professionals who represent: Health Services, Counseling Center, Housing & Residence Life, Office of the Dean of Students, Academic Deans, Provost’s Office, and University Police.

SBIT is UNCW’s central place to report students with behaviors of concern. If you are concerned about a student’s behavior, please contact the Student Affairs Case Manager in the Office of the Dean of Students at 962-3119.

IMMEDIATE HARM TO SELF OR OTHERS:
• Unreasonable demands for time and attention
• Irritability or aggressiveness
• Exhibiting signs of depression and/or anxiety
• It is reasonable to consider that the student may be suicidal
• The Division of Student Affairs has developed this information guide to aid UNCW faculty and staff as they assist students experiencing distress or address EMERGENCY AND SAFETY CONCERNS

If immediate action is required, call University Police (UPD) at 911.

CONFLICT OR QUESTIONS:
If not imminently suicidal, call the Counseling Center at 962-3119.
Then follow up with a call to the Office of the Dean of Students at 962-3119.

CALL UNIVERSITY POLICE (UPD) AT 911.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS TO HAVE:
University Police Department .............................................. 962-2222
Student Affairs Case Manager .......................................... 962-3119
University Police (UPD) ...................................................... 911
One of the alert text services that is a must for all students to have is the University of North Carolina Wilmington Student Police Department’s emergency text service, an added layer of security particularly when there is an identified threat.

UNCW Faculty and Staff ‘911’ Guide for Managing

Constitution of Distressed Students

Supportive Students

Distressed Students

Important Numbers to Have

Crisis Intervention

Emergency Youth Shelter

CARE Intermensal Violence Prevention & Response

Domestic Violence Shelters ans Services (24 Hours)

Rape Crisis Center

National Suicide Prevention Line

Cape Fear Hospital Emergency Dept.

Coastal Horizons Center, Inc.

Toll Free Hotline

UNCW Faculty and Staff ‘911’ Guide

University Police (UPD)
Inside View

Please round “TAB” corners as needed