

Recognizing and Responding to Students in Distress

Goal: whole person care for students so that they are healthy and safe

Important Note: Counseling has strict confidentiality standards; you may consult/refer to Counseling but you must also notify Student Affairs so we can ensure all resources are being utilized by the student and that communication with faculty and others potentially impacted occurs; care for students in distress is a whole team effort.

Differentiating Urgent and Emergency Situations

The Situation is Urgent if:

- There are written or verbal statements that mention despair, suicide or death
- Severe hopelessness, depression, isolation and withdrawal
- Statements that suggest the student is “going away for a long time”

If a student is exhibiting any of these signs, he or she may pose an immediate danger to him or herself. In this case, you should stay with the student and contact **University Counseling Services at (352) 588-TALK (8255)**. Then, please call Student Affairs at (352) 588-8992 and ask to speak with Jen, Ken, or Sean V. or email jen.shaw@saintleo.edu and kenneth.posner@saintleo.edu.

After hours you can access the on-call therapist by calling (352) 588-TALK or contacting University Safety at (352) 588-8333.

The Situation is an Emergency if:

- Physical or verbal aggression is directed at self, others, or property.
- The student is unresponsive to the external environment; he or she is (e.g. incoherent or passed out, disconnected from reality or exhibiting psychosis).
- The situation feels threatening to you or others.

If you are concerned about immediate threats to safety, call the **University Safety emergency line at (352) 588-8333**.

If the situation is not urgent or an emergency, establish a relationship with the student, express that you care, and personally connect them with one or more of the following resources:

Concern	Department	Contact
General Consultation- students in distress or disruptive behavior	Division of Student Affairs Dr. Jen Shaw Dr. Ken Posner Sean Van Guilder	352-588-7096 352-588-8992 352-588-8992
Accommodations	Accessibility Services	352-588-8464 or adaoffice@saintleo.edu
Academic: General	Office of Student Success	352-588-8500 or student.success@saintleo.edu
Tutors/Study Skills	Center for Academic Vision and Excellence (CAVE)	352-588-8307
Financial: Financial Aid	Student Financial Services	1-800-240-7658
Housing	Residence Life	352-588-8268
Emotional: Scheduling an appointment for counseling	Counseling & Prevention Services	352-588-TALK (8255)
Health	Health Center	352-588-8347
Title IX (reporting)	Title IX Coordinator	352-588-7429
Veteran's Affairs	Military Resource Center	352-588-8234 or militaryservices@saintleo.edu
Security and Safety	University Safety	352-588-8432 (non- emergency)

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Academic Indicators

- Repeated absences
- Missed assignments, exams, or appointments
- Deterioration in work quality
- Disorganized or erratic performance
- Written work with disturbing content (e.g. suicidal thoughts, violent thoughts)

Behavioral and Emotional Indicators

- Direct statements indicating distress, family problems, or loss
- Withdrawn from others, low motivation
- Failure to respond to outreach by professors or staff
- Angry or hostile outbursts, yelling, aggressive comments (highly disruptive behavior)
- Inability to or inappropriate communications (disconnected thoughts, threatening or disjointed emails/letters/messages, harassment)

Physical Indicators

- Deterioration in physical appearance or personal hygiene
- Excessive fatigue, falling asleep in class repeatedly
- Coming to class bleary-eyed or hung over
- Noticeable cuts, bruises or burns

Other:

- Peers expressing concern about a student
- Online postings that seem threatening or concerning

Steps to Take for a Student in Distress

1. Recognize the signs of distress
2. If you feel comfortable doing so, speak with the student privately about your care and concern and the excellence of Saint Leo resources.
3. Refer the student to resources. Notifying the resource of the student referral and your concerns is extremely helpful so the resource can reach out if the student does not self-refer.
4. Consult as needed with Counseling.
5. Notify/consult with Student Affairs.

Steps to Take for a Disruptive Student

1. If a student is out of control or a danger to self or others, call University Safety.
2. If the behavior is disruptive but not dangerous, speak with the student privately regarding expectations for behavior and your observations of their behavior. Document in writing the behavior and your actions.
3. Where you are able to do so, make changes to the learning environment that might inhibit disruptive behavior (i.e. seating arrangements; group assignments, etc.).
4. If the behavior continues, address it and also consult with/notify your academic supervisor and Student Affairs. Document in writing the behavior and your actions.
5. If necessary, dismiss the student from the class period. Consult with/notify your academic supervisor and Student Affairs.
6. If the student continues to be disruptive and does not leave, it is often more beneficial to dismiss class and then have University Safety/Student Affairs address the student rather than creating a situation in which this happens in front of the class.