

# Assisting Students in Distress

**St. Bonaventure University faculty and staff have the opportunity every day to show our commitment to supporting students with care, empathy, and respect. At SBU, our Franciscan values guide our response to emphasize a holistic approach-focusing on emotional, physical, social, and spiritual well-being of our students.**

## What is this?

This is a one page version of the Resource Folder (see QR code on back for more), designed to:

1. Guide faculty and staff to recognize and help a student in distress
2. Share crisis management guidelines
3. Share emergency campus & community resources
4. Share additional resources for student wellbeing
5. Empower fac/staff to intervene when necessary

## Why me?

Faculty and staff have an important role in the well-being of our students. As folks who see things in all different environments, you are often the first to see signs of distress. This policy is not asking faculty and staff to be experts, but to empower fac/staff to identify students in distress and make timely, appropriate referrals to counseling services, Campus Ministries, academic services, or any other services on/off campus to help students receive the care they need.

## What about privacy?

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of students. When there are concerns for the students health, safety, wellbeing, exceptions are made to provide them appropriate care and services. Observations of a student's conduct or statements made by a student are not protected by FERPA.

## INDICATORS OF DISTRESS:

### Academic

- sudden decline in quality of work and grades
- repeated absences
- disorganized performance
- multiple requests for extensions
- bizarre content in writings, presentations, or personal interactions
- disengagement through failure to hand in assignments, missing exams, lack of participation

### Physical

- Marked changes in physical appearance (deterioration in grooming or hygiene, significant weight gain/loss, etc)
- Excessive fatigue or sleep disturbances
- Intoxication, hangovers, excessive smell of alcohol or other substances
- Disoriented or "out of it"
- Disconnected or slurred speech
- Disclosure or evidence of self-harm

### Psychological

- Self disclosure of personal distress, including family problems, financial difficulties, thoughts of suicide, grief
- Excessive tearfulness or panic reactions
- Irritability or unusual apathy
- Concerns from peers
- Delusions, hallucinations, paranoia (expressed verbally or through assignments)

### Safety Risk

- Physical violence (shoving, grabbing, assault, use of weapon)
- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Implying or making threat to harm self or others
- Academic assignments dominated by themes of hopelessness, rage, worthlessness, isolation, despair, thoughts of harming self or others
- Stalking or harassing others
- Communication threats via email, texting, phone calls

So you've identified a student that needs support..what's next?

# Response Protocol

Is the student a danger to self/others or need immediate assistance for any reason?

## Yes

The student's behavior is clearly and imminently reckless, disorderly, dangerous, or threatening. This includes self-harm, suicidal behavior, or having a weapon

Call Safety & Security  
(716) 375-2525  
Call 911

Document incident using CARE report if accessible OR email [sbrookbank@sbu.edu](mailto:sbrookbank@sbu.edu)

## I'm not sure

The student shows signs of distress, but I am unsure how serious it is. The interaction has left me feeling uneasy/concerned about the student.

Engage the student about your concerns. Ask if they are thinking of hurting themselves or having thoughts of suicide

### Yes

Walk student to the Health Services in Doyle. If the center is closed or the student refuses, call Security

### No

Complete student referral form AND consult the counseling center or Safety & Security

## No

I am not concerned for the student's safety, but the student is having significant academic and/or personal issues and could use some support.

For faculty, visit  
My SBU -> Employee  
Tab -> Employee  
Links -> CARE Report

## Crisis Management Tips

- Safety first - do not hesitate to call for help if someone is displaying threatening or violent behavior
- Know the available resources and referral process
- If safe, meet privately and always allow sufficient time to meet. Don't be afraid to ask student directly if they are under the influence of alcohol/drugs, feeling confused, or having thoughts of harming themselves or others
- Clearly express your concerns
- Use a calm voice and non-confrontational approach. Avoid threatening, humiliating, and intimidating responses
- Ensure students know the physical location of the identified resource. Consider walking over together to help them get connected when possible and appropriate
- Always document your interaction with distressed students. Consult with your department chair/supervisor after any incidents of concern

## Resources

### On campus

- Student Wellbeing Health & Counseling
  - see Health Services in Doyle for appt
  - 716-375-2310, option 1
  - 8:30am-4:30pm M-F
- Office of Safety & Security/MERT
  - Doyle
  - 716-375-2525
- BetterMynd
  - 844-287-6963 (844-BTR-MYND)

### Off campus

- Cattaraugus County Department of Community Services Crisis Line
  - 800-339-5209
- National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
  - 988

For more resources on and off campus, scan QR code

