

Guidance for Students with Behavior of Concern

Assisting Students at Risk

There is a need to provide guidance to faculty, staff and students regarding communicating concerns for the well-being of students. Abnormal student behavior within the campus community can become an issue. Academic Affairs and Student Services are to be immediately informed when significant behavioral concerns are observed. The well-being of individual students, the student community and campus safety are of permanent importance.

Goals

The goals of this guide are to focus on early identification of behavioral problems with appropriate sensitive intervention:

1. Identify students-at-risk because of behavioral problems (psychological, personal/interpersonal);
2. Decrease the likelihood of personal and community crisis situations;
3. Preempt problems caused by lack of information about resources;
4. Evaluate the need for early intervention with identified students;
5. Coordinate appropriate referrals;
6. Provide guidance to students with concerns about their peers regarding where to direct their concerns;
7. Strengthen campus-wide responsiveness to mental health and safety needs;

Behaviors of Concern

How does one determine the difference between "normal" college-age behavior and behavior requiring intervention? College years are a time when many students experiment with new behavior. They voice feelings and thoughts that have been long hidden or kept very private. Change is to be expected during early years but the stresses of academic and social life can lead to serious problems which manifest themselves with abnormal emotional behavior.

Signs that a student may be in trouble include observable behavior such as:

- Threatening self or others
- Increased irritability or aggressive behavior
- Alcohol or drug use that interferes with functioning or jeopardizes relationships or performance
- Visible distress
- Decline in personal hygiene
- Inappropriate classroom behavior

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- Bizarre behavior, seemingly out of touch with reality
- Argumentative behavior that is disproportionate to the situation
- Significant changes in mood or daily functioning
- Isolation
- Bullying or being bullied
- Is unmanageable (e.g., aggressive, significantly inappropriate, and/or out of touch with reality, unable to care for him or herself)
- Is threatening you or someone else
- Is threatening suicide or self-harm

With the exception of harm to self or others, a single behavior (such as sadness or occasional withdrawal from others) may not indicate a problem, but a consistent pattern of this behavior or continued decline in functioning may warrant exploration either with the student or through consultation with a colleague. Don't be afraid to consult with someone about these concerns.

How Do I Report a Concern?

Any faculty or staff member of the campus community can report a concern. Reporting forms are available both in hard copy and online and will consist of a checklist of information. Completed reporting forms can be emailed to the RIT Manager for Academic Affairs at abalidemaj@aukonline.org.

IF YOU ARE A FACULTY MEMBER

If you have concerns about the well-being of a student, or are concerned about behavior which negatively affects classroom learning, please contact your Academic Affairs Office. The Academic Affairs Office will work with faculty and Unit Heads to assess concerns and to determine what, if any, next steps should be taken.

IF YOU ARE A STAFF MEMBER

You should contact the RIT Manager for Academic Affairs at 038 608 608 ext. 153 or complete the reporting form. Completed reporting forms can be emailed at abalidemaj@aukonline.org.

IF YOU ARE A STUDENT

You should speak to a professional staff member such as an academic advisor, a faculty member you trust, or with the RIT Manager for Academic Affairs about your concern.

Concerns from multiple sources about the same student will be a significant indicator of when a student is having emotional difficulties in life. Appropriate help and professional counseling will be considered.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs together with the RIT Manager for Academic Affairs will review reports, look for patterns of behavior, and may gather a group for further consultation to determine an appropriate response.

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CONSULTATION WITH A PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

Faculty, staff and students may be scheduled to meet with a professional counselor to discuss their concerns about a particular student. Talking to a counselor may help to:

- Clarify student's thoughts and feelings about a situation
- Assess the seriousness of the situation
- Identify appropriate resources and action
- Find the best way to make a referral

IN AN EMERGENCY

If the safety of a student or someone in the campus is at stake,

OR

If you are dealing with someone who is extremely disruptive, bizarre or irrational ***call the Security Office at 038 608 608 ext. 155***. Remain calm. Do not leave the student unattended.

It may be helpful for you to talk to someone if you have had an encounter with a student and you feel distressed as a result.

IF A STUDENT THREATENS YOU BY EMAIL, MAIL OR PHONE:

Threatening mail, phone calls and emails received on- or off-campus from a student should be referred to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Referring a Student for Professional Help

When to refer

In many cases of student distress, faculty and staff can provide adequate help through empathic listening, facilitating open discussion of problems, instilling hope, validating and normalizing concerns, conveying acceptance, giving reassurance and offering basic advice. In some cases, however, students need professional help to overcome problems and to resume effective functioning. The following signs indicate a student may need counseling:

- The student remains distressed following repeated attempts by you and others to be helpful.
- The student becomes increasingly isolated, unkempt, irritable, or disconnected.
- The student's academic or social performance deteriorates.
- The student's behavior reflects increased hopelessness or helplessness.
- You find yourself doing ongoing counseling rather than consultation or advising and feeling yourself pulled in directions with which you are uncomfortable.
- The student shows significant and marked changes in behavior and mood.

How to refer

Speak to the student in a direct, concerned and caring manner. Because students may initially resist the idea of counseling, be caring but firm in your judgment that counseling would be helpful. Also, be clear about the reasons that you are concerned ("I am worried about you doing okay in school and I bring this up really because I care about how you are doing."). Be knowledgeable in advance about the Counseling Services provided outside of the AUK (see the attached list).

Suggest that the student call to make an appointment, and provide the necessary phone number.