

RED FOLDER INITIATIVE

A guide to help recognize,
respond to and refer
distressed students at
Northwestern State University.



NORTHWESTERN STATE
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA



1. RECOGNIZE

Please review the most common signs of distress.
Students may also present with indicators not listed.

SAFETY:

- Signs of physical abuse
- Signs of self-injury
- Interpersonal violence
- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Implying or making a direct threat to harm self or others
- Stalking or harassing
- Disclosure of thoughts of death, suicide
- Verbal abuse (e.g., taunting, badgering, intimidation)
- Unresponsive or altered level of consciousness

ACADEMIC:

- Repeated absences and/or decline in quality of work or performance
- Writings/creative work that include disturbing content and/or themes of despair, hopelessness, violence, death or aggression
- Disorganized performance and/or repeated requests for extensions
- Conduct that interferes with classroom, group work or activity engagement
- Frequent utilization of faculty/staff office hours for personal support

PHYSICAL/BEHAVIORAL:

- Marked changes in physical appearance
- Excessive fatigue, listlessness
- Sleep disturbance
- Intoxication, hangover, smelling of alcohol, evidence of drug abuse
- Disoriented or "out of it," out of touch with reality
- Garbled, rambling, tangential, disconnected or slurred speech
- Behavior out of context or out of character for the individual

PSYCHOLOGICAL/INTERPERSONAL:

- Self-disclosure of personal distress – family problems, financial difficulties, grief, shame
- Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions, irritability or unusual apathy
- Feeling hopeless and helpless
- Expressions of concern about the student by peers
- Concerning interpersonal communication style (e.g. withdrawn or agitated, mutters under breath, slow response time to questions)
- Delusions and paranoia



2. RESPOND

Use these important tips to determine the most appropriate response for a distressed student.

SAY WHAT YOU SEE

- Be direct
- Stick to the facts
- Don't make assumptions
- Describe the changes you have noticed
- Ask if they are okay
- Listen!

Conversation tips:

I have missed you in class lately. Is everything okay?

You have seemed down the last few classes. Is there anything you want to talk about?

SHOW YOU CARE

- Let them know you are there for them
- Be patient and listen
- Maintain eye contact
- Offer help where you can
- Ask what they need
- Remove distractions
- Summarize what they say

Conversation tips:

It sounds like you are really overwhelmed! Is there anything I can do to help out?

I'm hearing you describe that you've been really sad...

HEAR THEM OUT

- Listen
- Provide a space to be heard
- Be curious- ask questions
- Be present & patient
- Let them know they are not alone
- Affirm their feelings

Conversation tips:

I would like to hear more about how you've been feeling.

That sounds really challenging.

CONNECT TO HELP

- Determine the need and resources
- Reaffirm your support and care
- Connect them to resources
- Follow up

Conversation tips:

It sounds like you've really been struggling, have you thought about utilizing the counseling center? I have heard great things from students.

Thank you for sharing your experience. I am not an expert in this area, but I know someone who might be able to help. Would it be okay if I put you in contact with them?



3. REFER

Is the student a danger to self/others AND/OR is the student in immediate need of assistance for any reason?

SITUATIONS REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE

YES The student is at immediate risk of harming self or others, is incoherent or unresponsive, is in extreme distress, or is causing extreme distress to others. I do not feel comfortable with student being alone. Or, I have significant concerns about this student and cannot determine if they are at imminent risk.

Call 318-357-5431 if the student is ON-CAMPUS or you are unsure of student's location. Call 9-1-1 if the student is OFF-CAMPUS. After the student has connected to emergency resources, submit a Threat Assessment Team Report.

SITUATIONS REQUIRING ASSISTANCE

NO This is not an emergency, however, the student is showing signs of distress and the issue is impacting multiple areas of the student's life. I am concerned about them and want to get them more help soon.



Consider the nature of the student's distress and context-appropriate resources for consultation. Seek referral or consultation with Dean of Students or Counseling Services. See the Resources chart included in this guide for additional supports. Submit a report to the Behavior Intervention Team <https://www.nsula.edu/bit/>. When in doubt, if you feel the situation is an emergency or can't wait, contact University Police.

SITUATIONS YOU CAN HANDLE

NO I'm not concerned for the student's immediate safety, but believe they are struggling with academic and/or personal issues and could benefit from some additional support.



Refer to appropriate resources. Encourage the student to set up an appointment or assist them in doing so. See resource chart.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Reflect on your own boundaries, self-care and support needs. Utilize colleagues, supervisors, department heads for consultation and collaboration. Consult HR for information on professional development, wellness programs and employee assistance options that are available to support faculty/staff.
- Consider your status related to campus security requirements and if there are any Title IX or crime-related reports you must file.
- Report students of concern to the Behavior Intervention Team by filling out an on line referral form <https://www.nsula.edu/student-resources/bit/>
- While in your role respecting privacy is required under FERPA, consulting about academic, safety, health and wellness concerns is allowable under FERPA.
- Circle back with the student after a referral to a support resource to check in.
- Understand that due to privacy regulations, it may not always be possible for other campus resources to provide you detailed information back.

Resources

ON-CAMPUS RESOURCES

Title IX Coordinator318-357-5570
obannonj@nsula.edu

Accountability and Student Conduct318-357-5286
studentconduct@nsula.edu

Health Services318-357-5351
nashj@nsula.edu

Counseling Services318-357-5621
Room 305 Friedman Student Union

Accessibility & Disability Support318-357-4460
smithc@nsula.edu

Project Celebration, Inc.
Sexual Assault:318-256-6242
Domestic Violence:318-256-3408

Campus Living Villages
University Place 2318-214-5400
University Columns318-214-5414
Varnado Hall318-209-3233

OFF-CAMPUS RESOURCES

Natchitoches Regional Medical Center
Examiners (SANE) NRM318-214-4200
Emergency Transportation318-214-4200
Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners318-471-6143

Natchitoches City Police318-352-8101

Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office318-352-6432

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

On-Campus:

NSU University Police
and 24/7 Confidential Advisors318-357-5431

Off-Campus: 9-1-1

HOTLINE/TEXTLINE RESOURCES

Suicide Prevention LIFELINE Call 988
(24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline1-800-656-4673

The Steve Fund Text STEVE to 741741
to reach a culturally trained counselor

Trevor Project Hotline1-866-488-7386

Veterans' Crisis Line1-800-272-8255 and press 1

Trans Lifeline1-877-565-8860