

Troubled Students: Faculty/Staff Role

As a staff or faculty member, you are in a good position to spot someone who may be emotionally distressed. While some of this is to be expected, especially during stressful times of the year, you might notice someone acting in a way that is inconsistent with your normal experiences with that person. You may be able to be a resource in times of trouble. Your expression of interest and concern may be a critical factor in helping the individual to reestablish emotional equilibrium. You may also be able to alert the college so that an appropriate intervention can be made.

Possible Signs of Distress

- Marked change in academic performance or behavior
- Excessive absences or tardiness
- Has trouble eating or sleeping
- Disruptive behavior
- Undue aggressiveness
- Exaggerated emotional response that is obviously inappropriate to the situation
- Depressed or lethargic mood
- Hyperactivity or very rapid speech
- Marked change in personal hygiene
- Excessive confusion
- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Dependency (Individual hangs around or makes excessive appointments to see you)
- Strange or bizarre behavior indicating loss of contact with reality
- Feelings of helplessness or hopelessness
- Verbal or written references to suicide
- Verbal or written references to homicide or assaultive behavior
- Isolation from friends, family or classmates
- Gives away prized possessions
- Prepares for death by making a will and final arrangements

The “Do’s”

- DO speak with the student privately.
- DO let him or her know you are concerned about his or her welfare.
- DO express your concern in behavioral, nonjudgmental terms.
- DO tell him or her you are willing to help.
- DO listen carefully to what he or she is troubled about.
- DO help him or her explore options.
- DO suggest resources.
- DO make a referral 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 respect the person’s value system, even if you do not agree with it.
- DO maintain clear and consistent boundaries and expectations.
- DO recognize your limits. DO document the interactions or incident.

The “Don’ts”

- DON’T promise confidentiality.
- DON’T judge or criticize.
- DON’T ignore unusual behavior.
- DON’T make the problems your own.
- DON’T involve yourself beyond the limits of your time and skill.

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Referrals and Resources

In a crisis situation, CALL CAMPUS POLICE @ (703) 764-5000

FILE A NOVACares REPORT: www.nvcc.edu/novacares, then click the **Report Concerns** box

For guidance or inquiries, please contact the NOVACares Office.

Connie Kirkland – Director @ (703) 323-2136

MaryAnn Raybuck- Mental Health Case Manager @ (703) 425-5202

Monica Chenault- Program Manager @ (703) 425-5472

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