

UMBC FACULTY AND STAFF GUIDE FOR HELPING A PERSON IN DISTRESS

The Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs and the Behavioral Risk Assessment and Consultation Team have developed this informational guide to aid faculty and staff in assisting people who are experiencing difficulties.

GENERAL GUIDELINES WHEN DEALING WITH A PERSON IN DISTRESS:

- Be aware of the location of the nearest telephone, whether it is within the building, your office or a personal cell phone
- If the person is causing a disruption to the classroom or office environment but does not pose a threat:
 - address the inappropriate behavior with the person, and/or
 - ask the person to leave the room or office
- If in doubt, call the UMBC Police Department at 410-455-5555

CAMPUS RESOURCES:

Emergency	410-455-5555
University Police	410-455-5555
BRACT	410-455-2393
Counseling Center	410-455-2472
Student Affairs	410-455-2393
Student Judicial Programs	410-455-2453
Sexual Misconduct	410-455-1606
Human Resources	410-455-2337
General Counsel	410-455-2870
Health Services	410-455-2542
Residential Life	410-455-2591

DISRUPTIVE PERSON

A person whose conduct is disruptive or dangerous (e.g making verbal or physical threats to others; threatening suicide and resisting help).

Potential Harm to Self or Others
 UMBC Police 410-455-5555
 Off Campus: 911

TROUBLED PERSON

A person who is troubled, confused, very sad, highly anxious, irritable, lacks motivation and/or concentration, demonstrating bizarre behavior, or thinking/talking/writing/ e-mailing/ texting about suicide.

Consultation or Questions
 Counseling Center: 410-455-2472
 UMBC Police: 410-455-5555
 Student Affairs: 410-455-2393



HELPFUL INFORMATION

Disruptive Student Behavior

The UMBC Code of Student Conduct outlines the standards and expectations for students' conduct and behavior on and off campus. The Code of Student Conduct assists students to understand their role in the academic community and establishes procedures that ensure due process in the adjudication of complaints, concerns, etc. *Website: <http://www.umbc.edu/sjp/articles/code.html>*

The information below are examples of disruptive student behavior as defined by the UMBC Code of Student Conduct.

Behavior which Jeopardizes the Health or Safety of Self or Others.

This rule prohibits, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) unauthorized/illegal possession, storage, or use of weapons or firearms (Possession of a license to possess or use a weapon shall not constitute a defense of any violation of this Rule, as the University reserves the right to restrict even licensed possession or licensed behavior when such restrictions adds to the protection of person or property of the University.);
- b) acts, or threats, of physical assault or abuse;
- c) violence;
- d) failure to cease repetitive unwanted behavior directed toward a particular individual or individuals;
- e) disorderly conduct;
- f) hazing as that term is defined in UMBC Policy V-8.00.01 found at <http://www.umbc.edu/policies>
- g) forcible detention;
- h) threatening behavior;
- i) indecent exposure;
- j) alcohol poisoning;
- k) drug overdose; or,
- l) rioting

Disruption of Any University Activity.

This rule prohibits, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) acts inhibiting, interfering with, obstructing, or damaging either (i) an academic activity (e.g., teaching, research, or University Administration) or organized student activity; or (ii) a campus resource relating to academic materials (e.g., library books, audiovisual materials and tapes);
- b) any intentional act substantially interfering with the freedom of expression of others on University property or at University sponsored activities; or
- c) activity which disrupts or interferes with normal University functions or operations.

STUDENT DEATH NOTIFICATION

In the event of the death of a currently enrolled student, an official notification of the student death will be issued by the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. Records pertaining to this student will be restricted by the registrar's office. Faculty or staff members receiving information that a currently enrolled student has died are asked to contact the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs (410-455-2393). The Vice President of Student Affairs will verify such reports with appropriate officials and issue official notifications to the campus community.

BEHAVIORAL RISK ASSESSMENT AND CONSULTATION TEAM (BRACT)

UMBC has established the Behavioral Risk Assessment and Consultation Team (**BRACT**) to assist in addressing situations where a person is displaying disruptive, disturbing, concerning or threatening behaviors. **BRACT** is an multidisciplinary team that examines reports of disruptive or disturbing behavior to help identify persons whose behaviors may endanger their own or others' health and safety. BRACT is not an administrative, treatment or disciplinary body; rather it is designed to provide information, recommendations, and referrals to those dealing with threatening or disruptive situations. It does not adjudicate, discipline or impose sanctions against any member of the campus community, nor does it provide or mandate treatment.

The team was established to:

- Respond to behavior assessing whether a person poses a risk to self or others;
- Make recommendations for response to circumstances of violence, threatening behavior, unwanted pursuit, or harassment;
- Provide resource information helpful to students, faculty and staff;
- Investigate the report and recommend appropriate actions that may lead to suspension, dismissal, termination of employment, filing of criminal charges, or ongoing monitoring for follow-up and observation of behavior patterns;
- Identify resources for troubled students and personnel and make referrals to appropriate campus and off-campus agencies;
- Make recommendations to the Vice President for Student Affairs and/or the Vice President for Administration and Finance;
- Assess, periodically, outcomes of actions taken.

Members of the UMBC community may contact and consult with BRACT members, whose contact information is listed below:

Kim Leisey, *Associate Vice President*
410-455-2393 | leisey@umbc.edu
Student Affairs

Paul Dillon, *Deputy Chief of Police*
410-707-6012 | pdillon@umbc.edu
UMBC Police Department

Christopher Tkacik, *Associate General Counsel*
410-455-2870 | tkacik@umbc.edu
Office of General Counsel

Valerie Thomas, *Associate Vice President*
410-455-3412 | vbelle@umbc.edu
Human Resources

Bruce Herman, *Interim Executive Director*
410-455-2472 | bherman@umbc.edu
University Health Services & Counseling Center

Jason Schiffman, Ph.D., *Professor and Director of Clinical Training*
410-455-1574 | schiffma@umbc.edu
Department of Psychology

Jacki Stone, *Community Health and Safety Specialist*
410-455-3797 | j.stone@umbc.edu
Student Affairs

BRACT, *Behavioral Risk Assessment and Consultation Team*
bract@umbc.edu

FAQ ON DEALING WITH A PERSON IN DISTRESS

Q. How should I respond to a student who is troubled or showing signs of distress?

A. For a person who is mildly or moderately troubled, you can choose to handle the situation in one or more of the following ways:

1. deal directly with the behavior/problem according to classroom/workplace protocol.
2. address the situation on a more personal level.
3. consult with a colleague, department head, counseling center, the office of the Vice President of Student Affairs, Behavioral Risk Assessment and Consultation Team member, Student Judicial Programs, and/or the Office of Human Resources.
4. refer the person to an appropriate campus resource (see phone numbers on the front of this folder).

Q. What are the warning signs of disruptive behavior?

A. A severely troubled or disruptive person exhibits behavior that requires immediate attention and care. These problems are the easiest to identify.

Examples include:

1. highly disruptive behavior (hostility, aggression, violence, etc.).
2. inability to communicate clearly (garbled, slurred speech; unconnected, disjointed or rambling thoughts).
3. loss of contact with reality (seeing or hearing things which others cannot see or hear; beliefs or actions greatly at odds with reality or probability).
4. stalking behaviors.
5. inappropriate communications (including threatening letters, e-mail messages, harassment).
6. overtly communicating suicidal thoughts including referring to suicide as a current option (verbally or in written assignments).
7. threats to harm others.

Q. What are some signs that a person may be in distress?

A. A person in distress may not be disruptive to others, but may exhibit behaviors which indicate something is wrong, show signs of emotional distress and indicate that assistance is needed. Such persons may also be reluctant or unable to acknowledge a need for personal help. Behaviors may include:

1. serious performance problems or a change from consistently doing well to unaccountably poor performance.
2. excessive absences, especially if the person has previously demonstrated consistent attendance.
3. unusual or markedly changed patterns of interaction (avoidance of participation, excessive anxiety when called upon, domination of discussions, etc.).
4. other characteristics that suggest the person is having trouble managing stress successfully (a depressed, lethargic mood; very rapid speech; swollen, red eyes; marked change in personal dress and hygiene; falling asleep during class/work, etc.).
5. repeated requests for special consideration, such as deadline extensions, especially if the person appears uncomfortable or highly emotional while disclosing the circumstances prompting the request.
6. new or repeated behavior which pushes the limits of decorum and which interferes with effective management of the immediate environment.
7. unusual or exaggerated emotional responses which are obviously inappropriate to the situation.

Q. How should I respond when a student is disrupting my class?

Faculty members have broad authority to manage their classrooms and establish reasonable guidelines for class discussions that ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate in an orderly manner. If you believe a student's behavior is inappropriate, consider a general word of caution rather than singling a student out or embarrassing the student. "If the behavior in question is irritating, but not disruptive, try speaking with the student after class. Most students are unaware of distracting habits or mannerisms, and have no intent to be offensive or disruptive. There may be rare circumstances where it is necessary to speak to a student during class about his or her behavior. Correct the student in a manner indicating that further discussion can occur after class." (Pavela, 2001, p.5).

If a student's behavior reaches the point that it interferes with your ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to benefit from the class, the student should be asked to leave the room for the remainder of the class period. The student should be provided with a reason for this action and an opportunity to discuss the matter with you as soon as is practical. In such situations, consultation and referral to Student Judicial Programs may be appropriate.

Adapted from the ASJA Law and Policy Report, No.26, ASJA & Gary Pavela, 2001.

Q. How should I respond to a disruptive person?

1. Remain calm and know whom to call for help, if necessary. Find someone to stay with the student while calls to the appropriate resources are made.
2. Remember that it is NOT your responsibility to provide the professional help needed for a severely troubled/disruptive person. You need only to make the necessary call and request assistance.
3. When a student expresses a direct threat to themselves or others, or acts in a bizarre, highly irrational or disruptive way, call the UMBC Police at 410-455-5555.

Q. How do I refer a student to counseling?

1. Recommend counseling services to the student.
2. Determine the student's willingness to go to a helping resource. Reassure the student that it is an act of strength to ask for help.
3. Dispute the myth that only "weak" or "crazy" people go for counseling.
4. Remind them that campus counseling services are free and confidential.
5. Offer to help make the initial contact by calling or going with the student to Counseling Center.



MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING AT UMBC

The root of most stigmas is generally fear. The stigma surrounding mental illnesses in the United States is no different: fear of not understanding the problem, fear of doing or saying the "wrong" thing, and fear of not knowing what to do when someone needs help.

Mental Health First Aid is a 8-hour training course designed to give members of the UMBC community key skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The evidence behind the program demonstrates that it makes people feel more comfortable managing a crisis situation and builds mental health literacy – helping the UMBC community identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness.

The Counseling Center provides a variety of on-line and in-person learning opportunities to continue your education and skills related to mental health. Contact the Counseling Center (410-455-2472) for training dates and more information; Mental Health First Aid, Kognito, Notice and Respond, Just in Case App, and Screening tools