WORKING WITH DISTRESSED STUDENTS:
A Decision-Making Tree for Faculty and Staff

NDSU Care Team • ndsu.edu/deanofstudents
Counseling Center • ndsu.edu/counseling
ndsucounseling ndsuca
You want to help. As a North Dakota State University faculty or staff member, you sometimes encounter students in distress. This information will help you know what to look for, recognize the warning signs and take a course of action to get students the assistance they need.

**STUDENT IS UNDER DISTRESS.**

**SIGNS OF DISTRESS** (include, but are not limited to):
- Nervousness, agitation, or irritability
- Infrequent class attendance
- Crying
- Changes in academic performance
- Changes in personal or classroom relationships
- Deterioration in hygiene
- Undue aggressive or abrasive behavior
- Fearfulness
- Dependency (e.g., student who is excessively clingy)
- Frequent alcohol and/or drug use

**EXPRESS YOUR CONCERNS TO THE STUDENT, POINTING OUT YOUR OBSERVATIONS AND ASKING ABOUT THEIR SITUATION.**

**ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT THE STUDENT’S SAFETY OR DO YOU SEE POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS?**

**WARNING SIGNS** (include, but are not limited to):
- Withdrawal from others (isolation)
- Talks about or threatens suicide
- Makes statements such as “I want this all to end” or “I can’t go on anymore”
- Significant confusion
- Behavior is bizarre, alarming and/or dangerous
- Makes statements about hurting or killing others
- Marked change in behavior, mood and/or hygiene
- Appears depressed (frequent crying, insomnia, oversleeping, weight loss/gain, loss of pleasure)
- Appears/reports hopelessness or helplessness
- Engagement in self-harm (e.g., cutting)

**DO YOU BELIEVE THERE IS IMMINENT DANGER?**

**YES, IMMINENT DANGER IS CLEARLY PRESENT.**

**EXAMPLES**
- Student found unconscious or unresponsive
- Student tells you that they have ingested pills beyond the recommended dose (whether the student states it is a suicide attempt or not)
- Student is threatening immediate danger to self (e.g., threatening to jump out a window, ingest pills, shoot self)
- Student attempts, or threatens, to cause physical harm to someone else (or to people in general)

**UNCLEAR WHETHER IMMINENT DANGER IS PRESENT**

**EXAMPLES**
- Student reports a history of self-injurious behavior (e.g., cutting or burning) and now states a desire to engage in this behavior again.
- Student is found intoxicated or appears to be under the influence of substances.
- Student makes statements that are suggestive of suicidal/homicidal thinking that are not overtly indicative of imminent danger (e.g., I don’t know if I can keep going).
- Student appears emotionally distraught and does not respond to your attempts to calm them.

**NO, IMMINENT DANGER IS CLEARLY NOT PRESENT**

**EXAMPLES**
- You observe a student crying after getting off the phone during a class break, they report that they are sad about the end of a romantic relationship; they deny suicidal/homicidal thoughts and show no warning signs.
- Student is struggling in your class due to academic skill deficits and test anxiety; they deny suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs.
**STUDENT AFFAIRS AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT**

**IMMEDIATELY CALL UNIVERSITY POLICE AT 911.**

**CONTACT YOUR SUPERVISOR AND INFORM THEM OF THE SITUATION.**

Write down
1. Relevant details about the situation (who, what, when, where)
2. Any background information you have about the student’s difficulties
3. A number where you can be reached

Give a copy to University Police (to assist emergency treatment providers), a copy to your supervisor, and keep a copy yourself.

**REPORT THE INCIDENT TO THE CARE TEAM** by calling the Dean of Students Office (231-7701), emailing ndsu.srr@ndsu.edu or completing a reporting form on the Dean of Students website under Student Advocacy.

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**CAMPUS RESOURCES**

- **Care Team**
  
  Old Main 100
  
  231-7701

- **Career and Advising Center**
  
  Ceres Hall 302
  
  231-7111

- **Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources**
  
  Library, Lower Level - Suite 17
  
  231-8463

- **Counseling Center**
  
  Ceres Hall 212
  
  231-7671

- **Customer Account Services**
  
  Ceres Hall 302
  
  231-8782

- **Dean of Students**
  
  Old Main 100
  
  231-7701

- **Emergency**
  
  911

- **Graduate School**
  
  Putnam Hall 106
  
  231-7033

- **Information Technology Services**
  
  Help Desk
  
  231-8685

- **International Student and Study Abroad Services**
  
  Memorial Union 116
  
  231-7895

- **Multicultural Programs**
  
  Memorial Union 178
  
  231-1029

- **One Stop**
  
  Memorial Union, Main Level
  
  231-6200

- **Registration and Records**
  
  Ceres Hall 110
  
  231-7981

- **Residence Life**
  
  Bison Court West
  
  231-7557

- **Student Financial Services**
  
  Ceres Hall 202
  
  231-6200

- **Student Health Service**
  
  Wallman Wellness Center
  
  231-7331

- **Student Success Programs**
  
  West Dining Center, Lower Level
  
  231-8379

- **University Police and Safety Office**
  
  231-8998

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**CALL THE COUNSELING CENTER** and ask to consult with a counselor (231-7671). Do not email, this situation requires an immediate response. If the situation occurs outside of normal business hours, contact University Police (231-8998).

**PROVIDE ALL THE RELEVANT INFORMATION** you have about the student and situation to the counselor. If you are a faculty member you may have had the opportunity to observe the student over time, and with guidance, you can provide valuable information about the student’s mental health.

When you contact the Counseling Center about a student, the center will work with the student and situation to determine the proper course of action.

**CONTACT YOUR SUPERVISOR** and inform them of the situation. Document relevant details about the situation (who, what, when, where) and any background information you have about the student’s difficulties. Keep a copy of this documentation.

**REPORT THE INCIDENT TO THE CARE TEAM** by calling the Dean of Students Office (231-7701), emailing ndsu.srr@ndsu.edu or completing a reporting form on the Dean of Students website under Student Advocacy.

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**DISCUSS COUNSELING SERVICES AND/OR OTHER UNIVERSITY RESOURCES** that might be helpful and address any concerns the student might have about these resources. If you need assistance in determining the appropriate resource(s), or about how to refer, call the Counseling Center (231-7671) and ask to speak with a counselor.

**SHOULD YOU DECIDE TO REFER TO THE COUNSELING CENTER:**

- Know that the Counseling Center would like to hear your concerns about the student and your thoughts about the urgency of the situation.
- Consider calling with the student or accompanying the student to the Counseling Center to initiate counseling services.
- Continue to follow up with the student as appropriate; contact the Counseling Center if you observe a significant change.

**NOTE:** If at any point you believe the student’s “Imminent Danger” status has changed, return to the “Imminent Danger” steps outlined in this decision-making tree.

The Counseling Center (231-7671) is available for ongoing consultation (as needed) to help address the impact of the situation.

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**STUDENT AFFAIRS AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT**

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**NDSU NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY**
NDSU CARE TEAM

PURPOSE OF THE CARE TEAM
The Care Team assesses and addresses concerns about student behaviors and coordinates student care while focusing on student safety and support. Addressed concerns may include specific incidents or general concerns about a student. When a referral is made, the team will attempt to determine what is happening and what kind of assistance the student may need.

MEMBERSHIP
The Care Team includes representation from the following (the team also will consult with other NDSU office/departments as appropriate):

- Dean of Students
- Counseling Center
- Residence Life
- University Police and Safety Office
- Faculty
- Assistant Attorney General

CONTACT INFORMATION
Follow the steps outlined by this decision-making tree and, when appropriate, contact the Care Team at 231-7701 or by email at ndsu.srr@ndsu.edu.

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NDSU COUNSELING CENTER, Ceres 212

WHAT IS COUNSELING?
Counseling is a collaborative process that involves the development of a unique relationship. Trained mental health professionals work with students to help them understand their feelings, behaviors, relationships, problems, choices and decisions. Discussion helps students reach a greater level of awareness and the power to make choices and take actions in all areas of life.

WHY COUNSELING?
At some point in most people’s lives there is a need for help in resolving conflicts, anxieties and frustrations as well as the need to carefully plan a career decision. Counseling can provide another means of learning to address such issues while in college. Counseling is available to help students succeed in reaching their personal and academic goals. Some skills that can be gained through counseling include:

- Techniques for effectively relating to friends, parents, professors, etc.
- Methods for dealing with disappointment, loss and/or other life changes
- Skills for coping with depression, anxiety and/or severe emotional difficulties
- Techniques for improving concentration
- Skills for combating procrastination and implementing effective time management
- Strategies for overcoming test anxiety
- Tools for achieving academic and personal goals
- Approaches for challenging negative thoughts and improving optimism
- Methods for improving motivation for consistent academic performance

SERVICES AVAILABLE
- Personal counseling
- Academic skills counseling
- Couples’ counseling
- Group counseling
- Workshops
- Resource library access
- ADHD Assessment

ELIGIBILITY AND FEES
All currently enrolled students are eligible for counseling services free of charge.

REFERRAL
When students request or require services that are beyond the role and scope of the Counseling Center or beyond the qualifications of the center staff, referrals to other agencies or professionals are provided.

CONSULTATION
Counselors are available to the entire NDSU community to offer insights on how to be most helpful to distressed students.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Counseling sessions are kept in the strictest confidence as delineated by the professional ethical standards of the field and North Dakota state law. The few exceptions to confidentiality, as mandated by legal statutes, are reviewed with students at the beginning of counseling.

HOURS
Fall and Spring Semesters
Monday–Friday: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Summer
Monday–Friday: 7:30 a.m.–4 p.m.

The NDSU Counseling Center is accredited by the International Association of Counseling Services, Inc.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
about assisting distressed students, call the Counseling Center at 231-7671 and/or visit the center’s website www.ndsu.edu/counseling.

NDSU does not discriminate in its programs and activities on the basis of age, color, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, participation in lawful off-campus activity, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, spousal relationship to current employee, or veteran status, as applicable. Direct inquiries to: Vice Provost, Title IX/ADA Coordinator, Old Main 201, 701-231-7708, ndsu.eoaa@ndsu.edu.