

FACULTY GUIDE: STUDENTS OF CONCERN

What are concerning behaviors/circumstances?

- Threats/plans/evidence of self-harm
- Noticeable cuts, burns or bruises
- Emotional or physical outbursts
- Extreme or sudden changes in mood or behavior
- More withdrawn or animated than usual
- Direct statements indicating distress, family problems, loss, or traumatic experiences
- Excessive or uncharacteristic decline in coursework and course attendance
- Written or artistic expression of unusual violence, morbidity, isolation, despair
- Continual seeking of special provisions
- Overblown or disproportionate responses to evaluations or requests for improvement
- Excessive alcohol or other drug use
- Expressions of severe anxiety or irritability; hopelessness or worthlessness; crying or tearfulness
- References to a plan to “end all of their problems”

How can Faculty respond to students in distress?

In case of imminent harm to self or others, contact emergency services, UNC Department of Public Safety or 9-1-1.

For all other cases, consider the following:

- Speak directly with the student
 - Meet privately
 - Set a positive tone
 - Express your concern and care
 - Point out specific things you’ve observed
 - Suggest resources such as Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) or Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS), walk them to CAPS or ODOS, suggest they speak with Academic Advising if the cause of distress is academic in nature.
 - Ask “How are things going for you?”
 - Ask non-judgmental open-ended questions
 - If there are signs of safety risk, ask directly
 - Suggest resources, walk them to CAPS
- Contact the ODOS at 919-966-4042 or submit a referral at odos.unc.edu/carereferral

If a student comes to me in confidence, am I violating their privacy if I report?

- Faculty, acting in the role as professors/instructors, are not governed by the Health Insurance Accountability and Portability Act (HIPAA).
- [UNC’s Policies and Procedures under FERPA](#) permit disclosure of personally identifiable information to other University faculty and staff where you believe they have a legitimate educational interest in the records, including the ODOS, CAPS, and your department chair/dean.
- When you need to share information outside the University, or you believe criminal prosecution may be warranted - but there is no imminent threat - first contact the Office of the Dean of Students or the Office of University Counsel for assistance before contacting the police or a federal agency. Always call 9-1-1 in the case of imminent harm.

What does all this mean?

- If you notice that a student is exhibiting signs of distress, **do something**.
 - Meet with the student
 - Consult with CAPS or the Dean of Students
 - Submit a Care Report
 - Contact emergency services in the case of threat of imminent harm to the student or others