DIFFICULT STUDENTS, DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS AND STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Behavioral Evaluation and Threat Assessment

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
DENVER | ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS
GOALS FOR THIS SESSION

- Know who we are and what we do
- Gain a clear understanding of your role as stewards of the learning environment
- Begin to Recognize signs and symptoms of stress and distress
- Gain an understanding of how to assist students in distress and access resources on campus
- Learn basic skills for how to de-escalate a situation
YOUR ROLE

- Often the first to recognize that a student needs help
- Important to have knowledge of campus and community resources for referral
- Responsibility to maintain appropriate learning environment
WHAT TO EXPECT

- Our response will vary greatly depending on:
  - Nature and Severity of the behaviors and concerns
  - Actions and attempts made by faculty/staff to address concerns
  - Determination of Code of Conduct Violation

- Our response may include:
  - Counseling Referral and/or case management
  - Conduct hearing and/or mediated conversation with student and faculty
  - Consultation and guidance
  - Referral to Chair or Dean for Academic Review
  - Summary Suspension or other immediate action where there is an immediate threat
  - Criminal background check

Our goal is to resolve issues informally whenever possible.
SIGNS OF STRESS/DISTRESS

- Depression and/or suicidal expression
- Agitation
- Anxiety
- Aggression or Violence
- Delusions, Poor contact with reality
- Substance Abuse
TIPS ON COMMUNICATION

- Listen to students and show interest when they are expressing concerns or needing assistance—be gracious, smile!
- Use friendly, open ended questions and “I” statements.
- Reflect back what you heard when a student expresses concerns or asks questions.
- Be aware of the non-verbal messages you are sending.
- Remove objects from between you and the student whenever possible.
- Remember you can model good communication skills.
  - Meeting the student where they’re at—body language, tone, volume, etc.
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- You are encouraged to document incidents and concerns in writing
  - We look for patterns of behavior—you may not be the first person to submit a report about this student
  - Second and third hand reports can present numerous challenges
    - Reports should address concerns directly – if there is a concern it needs to be expressed as a concern
  - Objectivity is essential in documenting disruption
    - The report should be very factual and void of personal opinions and feelings
    - Detail, detail, detail. The more details included in the report that easier it is to make an informed decision.
TIPS FOR THE CLASSROOM
SETTING THE TONE FOR A PRODUCTIVE AND RESPECTFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Articulate clear classroom expectations in the syllabus, and review during the first class
- Develop agreements as a class during the first session
- Respond to problems quickly and consistently
- Look to non-disruptive students for cues: is the class following material?
STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

 Read and understand the Student Code of Conduct
 Some concerns do not necessarily fit into this code and may need to be evaluated in more than one context
 Creative expression vs. conduct/behavioral/mental health concern
 ISIS negative service indicators
ADDRESSING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

- Do not wait for patterns to form. Address concerns immediately
- Correct innocent mistakes and minor first offenses gently
- Give a general word of caution the group
- If possible, speak with the student in private
- If in a group, correct the student courteously and indicate that further discussion can occur later
- Documentation and Warnings
ADDRESSING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

- Consult your Department Chair, supervisor, or other colleagues for guidance and suggestions
- In the face of persistent disruption, you may ask the student to leave your environment
- In instances where a student is asked to leave, make sure to document the time, date and circumstance and inform your supervisor.
- If there is threat of violence or other unlawful behavior, call Campus Police 303-556-5000 (6-5000)
WHEN TO CONSULT WITH BETA?

- After initial attempts to address the behavior have failed
- You know that you cannot handle the behavior
- You believe personality differences will interfere with your ability to resolve the situation
- You are unsure how to proceed
HOW TO MAKE A REPORT OR REFERRAL TO BETA?

- Submit the “Student of Concern” form at https://cudenver-jams.symplicity.com/care_report/
  OR visit www.ucdenver.edu/beta and click on “Submit a Concern”

- Document the situation in writing, including your attempts to resolve it
  - Dates, times and locations
  - What was said and by whom

- Call 303-556-2444 for assistance
WAIT A MINUTE…

- The student trusts me, am I getting that person “in trouble?”
- This student scares me, will I be safe?
- This student scares me, will I be anonymous?
- How does this report affect the student’s academic record and/or transcript?
DO’S AND DON’TS

The Depressed and/or Suicidal Student

Approximately 20.9 million Americans suffer from a mood disorder in a given year. [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

More than 90% of people who commit suicide have a diagnosable mental disorder. [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

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<th>DO</th>
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<td>• Let the student know you are willing to help</td>
<td>• Say things like “Don’t worry” or “it could be worse.”</td>
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<td>• Provide your full attention when a student is expressing his/her feelings</td>
<td>• Be afraid to use the word suicide or be afraid to ask if a student has thoughts of suicide</td>
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<td>• Use your referral list and express you are willing to assist in helping a student obtain a referral</td>
<td>• Ignore the problem</td>
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<td>• Be afraid to use referrals</td>
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DO’S AND DON’TS
NO ONE WINS A WAR BETWEEN EGOS

The Agitated/Anxious Student
Approximately 40 million American adults have a diagnosable anxiety disorder in a given year.
www.nimh.nih.gov

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<td>• Allow them to discuss their feelings/frustrations</td>
<td>• Become triggered or over-reactive or argumentative</td>
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<td>• Remain calm and offer reassurance</td>
<td>• Convey complicated instructions</td>
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<td>• Be clear about instructions</td>
<td>• Ignore or patronize</td>
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The Aggressive/Violent Student
If you are between the ages of 12 and 24 you face the highest risk of being a victim of violence.
www.apahelpcenter.org

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<td>• Remain calm</td>
<td>• Ignore warning signs of violence, e.g. yelling/screaming, clenched fists, statements like “I’m warning you”</td>
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<td>• Calmly acknowledge the person’s anger/frustration, “I can see you are very upset, I will try to assist you as best I can”</td>
<td>• Become hostile yourself</td>
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<td>• Remember you have the right to call for help</td>
<td>• Threaten, taunt, ignore or corner the person, or get into an arguing match</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Stay in open areas</td>
<td>• Be afraid to call 911</td>
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<td>• EVER TOUCH THE PERSON</td>
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DO’S AND DON’TS
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**Students Abusing Substances**
Approximately 12.8 million Americans use illegal drugs on a consistent basis. http://www.ncjrs.gov

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<td>• Share your observations and concerns with the person</td>
<td>• Ignore the problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Remember your referral list</td>
<td>• Pass judgment or criticize</td>
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<td>• Seek assistance from campus police in cases of intoxication or inappropriate behavior</td>
<td>• Criticize, lecture or offer anecdotal stories about the dangers of substance abuse</td>
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<td>• Remember substance abuse is often a symptom of other serious mental or emotional disorders</td>
<td>• Enable the person’s behavior by covering for him/her out of sympathy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Be manipulated into believing there is not a problem</td>
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DO’S AND DON’TS
NO ONE WINS A WAR BETWEEN EGOS

The Delusional/Psychotic Student
Approximately 2.4 million American adults suffer from schizophrenia in a given year. [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

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<td>Express compassion but do not offer support outside of professional boundaries</td>
<td>Challenge or agree with illogical beliefs</td>
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<td>Maintain a gentle but firm and steady tone of voice</td>
<td>Panic</td>
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<td>Call for help if you feel you are in danger</td>
<td>Make fun of or belittle illogical beliefs</td>
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<td>Be specific about what you are asking of a student or what behavior is expected</td>
<td>Play along with the bizarre behavior</td>
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<td>Offer to be the student’s friend</td>
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<td>Joke with the student or attempt to be funny to de-escalate the situation</td>
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RESOURCES AND REFERRALS

- When considering a referral for a student, it is very important to remember that students may be hesitant to the idea of assistance. Unfortunately, there is still a stigma attached to mental health counseling or even academic skills assistance which prevents many students from taking advantage of the many different resources our campus offers.

- The following is a short list of the many services the center provides:
  - Individual, Couples, and Family Counseling
  - Groups on various topics including, “How to Quit Smoking”, “How Reduce Stress”, “How to Maintain a Relationship” etc. (Varies by semester)
  - Tips on reducing test anxiety and how to study better
  - Learning disability assessment
  - Think Strong Skill Building workshops
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **B.E.T.A. Team – 303-556-2444**
  - Resource to help support faculty and staff working with disruptive and distressed students
    - Members from Community Standards and Wellness, Student and Community Counseling, Auraria Police, Legal, etc.

- **Training Workshops for CU Denver addressing**
  - classroom disruptions, emergency preparedness, mental health referrals, active listening, and the student conduct process
CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Community Standards and Wellness
Larry Loften - 303-556-2444; larry.loften@ucdenver.edu
Jill Creighton – 303-556-2444; jill.creighton@ucdenver.edu

Counseling Center
Jenny Lynn Ellis 303-556-4372

Auraria Campus Police
303-556-5000 from a cell phone or 911 from a Campus Landline

Behavioral Evaluation and Threat Assessment Team
www.ucdenver.edu/beta