

Guidelines for Faculty and Staff

Even though the protocols given below are detailed and specific, of paramount importance are the qualities of your presence when talking with the student. Possibly the most beneficial qualities are to be:

- *Genuine*
- *Caring*
- *Respectful*

The person you are talking with could be at an emotional low and is in need of human understanding. Focus more on these qualities and the protocols will feel more natural to implement.

Hold "Control + Link" to access each hyperlink below:

[Protocol For The Sexually Assaulted Student](#)

[Protocol For The Violent Or Physically Destructive Student](#)

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[Protocol For Helping Students Under The Age Of 18 Where Abuse Is Seen Or Suspected](#)

Introduction

The information on the following pages has been prepared to assist faculty and staff in the early identification and effective referral of students in distress. Such students frequently, and appropriately, look to faculty and staff for support. Additionally, faculty and staff can identify a student's need for support and offer valuable assistance even when the student does not initiate it.

Your willingness to respond to students in distress will undoubtedly be influenced by your personal style and your particular philosophy about the limits of an instructor's or staff member's responsibility for helping students grow emotionally as well as intellectually. Obviously, a student's openness to assistance, location of the contact and such situational factors as class size, length, and depth of your relationship may have a substantial effect on the type of interactions you can have with a student.

General Symptoms for Identifying a Distressed Student:

- Excessive procrastination and very poorly prepared work, especially if inconsistent with previous work.
- Infrequent class attendance with little or no work completed.
- Dependency (e.g., the student who hangs around or makes excessive appointments during office hours).
- Listlessness, lack of energy, or frequently falling asleep in class.
- Marked changes in personal hygiene.
- Impaired speech and/or disjointed thoughts.
- Repeated requests for special consideration (e.g., deadline extensions).
- Threats to others.
- Expressed suicidal thoughts (e.g., referring to suicide as a current option).
- Excessive weight gain or loss.
- Behavior which regularly interferes with effective class management.
- Frequent or high levels of irritable, unruly, abrasive, or aggressive behavior.
- Unable to make decisions despite your repeated efforts to clarify or encourage.
- Bizarre behavior that is obviously inappropriate for the situation (e.g., talking to something/someone that is not present).
- Appears overly nervous, tense or tearful.

General Guidelines for Interaction:

- Talk to the student in private.
- Express concern. Be as specific as possible in stating your observations and reasons for concern.
- Listen carefully to everything the student says.
- Repeat the essence of what the student has told you so your attempts to understand are communicated.
- Avoid criticizing or sounding judgmental.
- Remember the Academic and Counseling Center (ACC) is a resource and discuss referral with the student (x-3526).
- If the student resists referral and you remain uncomfortable with the situation, contact the ACC to discuss your concern, or call Public Safety (3333).
- Consult with your Supervisor regarding the situation.

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Protocol For The Sexually Assaulted Student

Genuine ~ Caring ~ Respectful

Sexual assault includes any kind of unwanted sexual behavior. Sexual assault does not provide sexual pleasure to the victim. Instead, it is an aggressive act in which one person exerts power over another. Rape or attempted rape constitutes an enormous loss of control over life. It is not an event that can be ignored or forgotten. Shock, guilt, confusion, anger, fear, helplessness, and depression are common responses to rape. A student may have difficulty concentrating on lectures. She/he may withdraw from class discussion and interaction with peers or may cease coming to class entirely. Some students may experience flashback experiences while in class.

DO:

- Assess whether the student has received medical attention (i.e., injuries, internal bleeding, pregnancy, and STDs are possible).
- If medical attention is needed, refer the student to the Emergency Room at San Juan Hospital, the student's personal physician, or call 911.
- *It is important to connect with Sexual Assault Services of Northwest New Mexico within 5 days of a rape. (325-2805 or 326-4700 Hotline)*
- If the student goes for medical attention or reports to the police, encourage her/him to have an advocate/support person accompany her/him.
 - The support person could be you, a friend, a roommate, someone from the Counseling Center staff, or someone from Sexual Assault Services of Northwest New Mexico.
- Encourage the victim to contact Public Safety (3333). Reporting the assault does not require that charges be filed.
- If there is no immediate medical need, focus on the victim's emotional needs:
 - Ask how you can be most helpful.
 - Listen to and believe the person.
 - Self-blame is common. Help the person to see that no behavior on her/his part deserves the response of rape.
 - Encourage the person to get counseling immediately. Counseling can help the person deal with her/his reaction to the rape and to feel positive about herself/himself again.
 - If there has been another contact from the perpetrator or a friend of the perpetrator (by phone or in person), encourage the victim to contact Public Safety (3333) or the Advising and Counseling Center (3526).
 - Occasionally the perpetrator is in the victim's class. If this is the case, the victim may need to make arrangements to meet independently with you for class credit, to change classes, etc. The victim may not be comfortable identifying the perpetrator to you. Thus, it may be helpful to ask her/him if the perpetrator is in the

same class, while giving assurance that this person does not have to be identified.

DON'T:

- “Take control”, since the victim already feels a great loss of control.
- Believe rape myths (e.g., she/he was asking to be raped if he/she wore particular clothes, went to the perpetrator's room, was drinking, walked home alone). This can result in blaming the victim.
- Let your own feelings about the perpetrator override those of the victim. If you get too angry or make threats against the perpetrator, the victim may not share further feelings in an attempt to keep you from getting into trouble.
- If you know the perpetrator and you state that it is difficult for you to believe that such a person would be a rapist, you may communicate disbelief to the victim.

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Protocol For The Violent Or Physically Destructive Student *Genuine ~ Caring ~ Respectful*

Violence due to emotional distress is not common. It typically occurs only when the student is completely frustrated and feels unable to do anything about it. The adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," best applies here.

DO:

- Explain clearly and directly what behaviors are acceptable (e.g., "You certainly have the right to be angry, but hitting or breaking things is not O.K.>").
- Stay in an open, public area.
- Request necessary help from Public Safety (3333) and/or the Advising & Counseling Center (3526). You can tell someone else to call if you feel it would be unwise to leave the student.
- Keep yourself safe.
- When all else fails, divert attention (e.g., "If you hit me, I can't be of help").
- Remember that student discipline is implemented by the Vice President of Student Services.

DON'T:

- Ignore warning signs that the person is about to explode (e.g., yelling, screaming, clenched fists, statements like, "You're leaving me no choice.")
- Threaten, dare, taunt, or "push into a corner."
- Touch.
- Block the door.
- Over-commit yourself and, therefore, not be able to deliver on what you promise.
- Ignore your limitations (instead, seek assistance).
- Agree to be bound by confidentiality.

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Protocol For Depressed Students

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DO:

- Let the student know you are aware he/she appears to be feeling down and that you would like to help.
- Encourage the student to express how she/he is feeling.
- Express your own concerns using specific examples: "I was concerned when you did not show up for the test / did not turn in your assignment / etc".
- Ask directly if you suspect suicidal thinking. If someone says or indicates she/he might hurt her/himself, ask a few more simple questions. It's okay to be blunt:
 - Are you thinking of hurting yourself?
 - Are you thinking of killing yourself?
 - Have you thought of how you would do that?
 - When were you thinking of doing that?
- Refer the student to the Advising and Counseling Center (ACC) by:
 - Walking him or her over to the ACC.
 - Calling the ACC (3526) to come and escort the student.
 - Calling Public Safety (3333) to escort the student to ACC.

DON'T:

- Say, "Don't worry", "Crying won't help", or "It will be better tomorrow", etc.
- Be afraid to ask whether the student is suicidal if you think that is a possibility.
See the above questions.

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Protocol For Students Of Domestic Violence

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The experience of domestic violence – whether it is physical, sexual, verbal or psychological abuse – is an extremely difficult and personally challenging time. The student possibly feels very alone and frightened. She or he has come to you because there is some level of trust. You can help the student to feel not so alone, as well as provide some guidance on what to do next. If a student does not approach you with the information, but you suspect that there is domestic violence or similar trauma, you can address the situation by requesting to meet with the student for a few minutes either before or after class.

The most important thing for you to do is be a caring person who listens and asks a few normal, simple questions that might be asked by any one who is willing to help a person in need. Questions such as:

- ❖ What's the matter?
- ❖ I noticed you seem to be very sad. Can you tell me what is happening?
- ❖ Are you okay?
- ❖ It looks like you've been losing weight...have you?
- ❖ Are you sleeping okay?
- ❖ How may I help you?
- ❖ Please tell me what's going on.

DO:

- Listen. Careful listening sends an important message:
 - I take you seriously.
 - I care about you (my students).
 - I want to help.
- Talk with her/him after class, if possible. Ask if she/he can meet with you for a few minutes when class is over.
- If needed, be a little late for your next class. Tell the distressed student that you have only a few minutes and want to express your concern.
- Refer the student to the Advising & Counseling Center (3526).
- Refer the student to Family Crisis Center, 325-3549 (office) or 564-9192 (Hotline 24 hrs.). Family Crisis Center is a Domestic Violence agency.
- Call Public Safety (3333) if there is a threat to the student while on campus.

DON'T:

- Offer them a ride or a place to stay
- Say, “Don’t worry”, “Crying won’t help”, or “It will be better tomorrow”, etc.
- Be afraid to ask whether the student is suicidal if you think that is a possibility.
- Minimize the situation or the depth of his/her feelings (e.g., "Oh, it will be much better tomorrow.").
- Over-commit yourself and, therefore, not be able to deliver on what you promise.
- Ignore your limitations (instead, seek assistance).
- Agree to be bound by confidentiality.

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Protocol For Suicidal Student

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Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students. The suicidal student is often uncertain or confused about killing himself/herself and typically responds to help. Suicidal students usually want to communicate their feelings; any opportunity to do so should be encouraged. This means you really can make a difference.

DO:

- Take the student seriously (80% of suicides give warning of their intent). A threat of or attempt at suicide is a plea for help.
- Remain calm while speaking to reassure the student.
- Practice “*Active Listening*”
 - *Listen for the essence of what the student is saying.*
 - *Try to identify the feelings the student is conveying.*
 - *Summarize back the essence and feelings you have heard and/or identified.*
- Problem solve only if the student appears interested in generating solutions.
- Provide support and empathy. Listen attentively to the student. Avoid debating.
- Refer the student to the Advising and Counseling Center (ACC) where trained professionals can provide additional services.
 - You can escort the student to the ACC yourself.
 - You can call the ACC (3526) and ask for a counselor to come to the student’s location.
 - You can call Public Safety (3333) and ask them to escort the student to the ACC.
- If the student refuses ACC support, call ACC and Public Safety.
YOU ARE REQUIRED TO REPORT A SUICIDAL STUDENT!
- If the student is threatening harm to another person or to property, call Public Safety immediately.
- Notify your supervisor of the incident.

Continued on next page

These ideas might be helpful . . .

Ask some simple questions, such as:

- What's the matter?
- Why are you so sad?
- Are you okay?
- Looks like you've been losing weight...have you?
- Are you sleeping okay?
- May I help you?
- Would you like to tell me what's going on?
- I have some ideas that might be helpful, may I share them with you?

If someone says or indicates she/he might hurt her/himself, ask a few more simple questions. It's okay to be blunt:

- Are you thinking of hurting yourself?
- Are you thinking of killing yourself?
- Have you thought of how you would do that?
- When were you thinking of doing that?

DON'T:

- Debate.
- Minimize the situation or the depth of his/her feelings (e.g., "Oh, it will be much better tomorrow.").
- Say, "But you have everything to live for."
- Be afraid to ask the person if they are so depressed or sad that they want to hurt themselves (e.g. "You seem so upset and discouraged that I'm wondering if you are considering suicide").
- Over-commit yourself and, therefore, not be able to deliver on what you promise.
- Ignore your limitations (instead, seek assistance).
- Agree to be bound by confidentiality.

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Protocol For Helping Students Under The Age Of 18 Where Abuse Is Seen Or Suspected

(Reporting of such a situation is MANDATORY BY LAW)

Genuine ~ Caring ~ Respectful

Abuse can be physical, sexual, verbal or psychological. If you are working with a student who is *or you think is* under the age of 18, and the student tells you about being abused *or you suspect* has been abused, *you are required by law to report this.*

You can help by following these basic guidelines. Keep in mind that the student possibly feels very alone and frightened. She or he has come to you because there is some level of trust.

DO:

- Be a caring person who listens and talks with the student.
- If you think the student MIGHT be under 18 years old, ask his/her age. It is best to be certain about this, as the laws are very precise. If the student is 18 or older, see the appropriate Protocol on the Behavior Intervention Team website: <http://sanjuancollege.edu/bit/>
- Explain that it is important to bring the student to the Advising and Counseling Center (ACC) and that reporting this to the ACC is mandatory.
- **Walk the student over to the Advising and Counseling Center (ACC) or contact the ACC if the student is unwilling to go. 566-3526**
- Ask a counselor in the ACC if you are not clear about a situation or the process.

KNOW:

- It's the LAW. You MUST report a situation like this.
- The ACC will be there to support and assist you every step of the way. ACC will contact the appropriate authorities.
- You will need to stay with the student and counselor until all official reporting is completed. This could take more than an hour.

DON'T:

- Ignore the situation or pretend that a student did not tell you of the abuse.
- Feel guilty that you are going to have to report this. You are helping to end the abuse.
- Say, "Don't worry", or, "It will be better tomorrow", or "I promise to keep this confidential". Empty statements will distance you from the student.
- Wait. Reporting such a situation is required immediately.

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