Office of the Dean of Students
Wellness Center Health and Counseling Services

Dealing with Distressed and/or Disruptive Students........

A Referral Guide for Faculty, Administration & Staff

The Wellness Center Counseling Services in collaboration with the Office of the Dean of Students has developed this information guide to aid faculty and staff as you assist students experiencing distress. In addition, our collaboration with the Wellness Center Health Services, The Learning Center, Project Excel, the Office of Mission and Ministry, Student Engagement and Leadership and the Career and Experiential Learning Center enables us to address our students’ needs with a holistic approach so that they are able to function in a way to maximize their learning experience.

YOU ARE ON THE FRONT LINES!

University faculty and staff are sometimes faced with student behavior that is troublesome to them in their role of maintaining a safe and effective learning environment. The college experience is a mix of anticipation and anxiety, competition and camaraderie, dependence and independence. It is an exciting and sometimes a stressful time.

Most common presenting issues:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Relationship problems: family, etc.
- Grief
- Academic Concerns
- Eating Disorders/Body Image issues
- Stress Reduction
- ADHD
- Trauma
- Sexual Assault
- Domestic Violence
- Substance Use
- Financial stressors

WHEN IN DOUBT...

CALL 911

Distressed, Disruptive or Dangerous???

A distressed student’s personal wellbeing compromised:

- Sad, anxious
- Irritable
- Procrastinating
- Lacks motivation
- Lacks concentration
- Personal hygiene impaired
- Low energy

A disruptive student may negatively impacts others:

- Irritable, unruly, abrasive, aggressive behavior
- Verbal or physical threats
- Bizarre behavior that is obviously inappropriate for the situation

A dangerous student threatens the health and well-being of those around him/her:

- Threats to others
- Carrying or brandishing a weapon
- Intimidating behaviors, including inappropriate touching and/or standing too close to others,
- Harassment or stalking

Helpful Resources at MSJ

Phone Numbers:
Wellness Center: 513-244-4949
Dean of Students: 513-244-4466
Director Wellness Center: 513-244-4371
Dean of Students: 513-244-4254
Project Excel: 513-244-4623
Director, Human Resources: 513-244-4979
Title IX Officer: 513-244-4393
Campus Police: 513-244-4226 or dial “0” from any campus phone

Other Resources:
24/7 Suicide Prevention Hotlines: 513-281-2273 (281-CARE)
National Hotlines: 1-800-273-8255 (TALK); 1-800-784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE)

CRISIS TEXT LINES
Text “TALBERT” to 839863
Text “START” to 741-741
Free, 24/7, Confidential
Dealing with Distressed and/or Disruptive Students

A Distressed Student….What is my role?

As a staff or faculty member, you are in a good position to identify someone who may be emotionally distressed. While some of this is expected, especially during stressful times of the year, you may notice someone acting in a way that is inconsistent with your normal experience with that person. You may be able to be a resource in times of trouble. Your expression of interest and concern may be critical factors in helping the student re-establish emotional equilibrium. You may also be able to alert the university so that an appropriate intervention can be made.

What do I say? How do I make a referral?

Do

- Do keep in mind that a referral is a transfer of trust.
- Do speak with the student in private.
- Do let the student know you are concerned about his/her welfare.
- Do listen carefully to student’s concerns.
- Do help the student explore options.
- Do let student make his/her own decision.
- Do know campus resources for appropriate referral.
- Do define the purpose and the limitations of your role.
- Do state in an open and clear manner why you believe the person should seek help.
- Do address the behavior. “I notice that you have missed the last 3 assignments, and that is not like you.”
- Do assist students in anticipating what will happen if they use one of the appropriate resources.
- Do be sensitive to student readiness and timing of your suggestion.
- If a student is ready to accept referral for counseling, let him or her make the call. If a student prefers that you call the Wellness Center, do so with the student present. Call 513-244-4949, to make an appointment with a counselor. Walking the student to our services if time permits is also acceptable.
- Follow up with the student.

Don’t

- Don’t promise confidentiality.
- Don’t judge or criticize.
- Don’t ignore the unusual behavior.
- Don’t make the problem your own.
- Don’t involve yourself beyond the limits of your time or skill.

Possible signs of distress

It is important to identify and then refer those students who present concerns or problems outside the scope of your responsibility or comfort zone, and/or exhibit a combination (cluster) of atypical or unusual behaviors.

- Sudden withdrawal from interactions with faculty, administrators, staff, peers.
- A dramatic change (drop) in academic performance and/or grade point average.
- Substance abuse, e.g., smell of alcohol, slurred speech, bloodshot eyes.
- Loss of appetite or excessive eating.
- Persistent absence from class; little or no work accomplished.
- Lack of energy.
- Inappropriate or exaggerated behavior; aggressiveness; emotional outbursts, crying.
- Lack of concentration.
- Thought disorder.
- Insomnia or excessive sleep.
- Marked change in personal hygiene.

Wellness Center Hours

Monday—Friday
8:30 am–5:30 pm

Health Services Nurse
8:30 am–4:30 pm

To make Counseling appointment:
513-244-4949
OR 513-244-4769

On Call Counselor after hours:
513-807-2516

Signal

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Disruptive Students

What is Disruptive Behavior?
Behavior that interferes with other students, faculty or staff and their access to an appropriate educational or work environment is considered disruptive.

What are some examples of disruptive behavior?
- Yelling or screaming
- Persistent and unreasonable demands for time and attention
- Words or actions that have the effect of intimidating or harassing another
- Words or actions that cause another to fear for his/her personal safety
- Threats of physical assault

How do I deal with a disruptive person?
Disruptive behavior should not be ignored. Remain calm. Remind yourself that it is not about you; it is about the situation. Tell the individual that such behavior is inappropriate. Inform the individual that there are consequences for failing to improve the disruptive behavior. Many disruptive situations involve anger. Recognize that the period of peak anger usually lasts 20 to 30 seconds. Although this may seem like an eternity in the throes of the situation, often it is best to “wait it out” before progressing.

Documentation
Disruptive behavior should be documented. Write a factual, detailed account of what occurred. Use concrete terms. Share the Documentation appropriately with the Office of the Dean of Students and your immediate supervisor or department head.

Do
- Do listen through the anger. Use active listening
- Do acknowledge the feelings of the individual
- Do allow the person to vent and tell you what is upsetting him/her
- Do set limits. Explain clearly and directly what behaviors are acceptable. “I will be willing to speak with you as soon as you lower your voice”
- Do be firm, steady, consistent, and honest
- Do focus on what you can do to help resolve the situation
- Do make personal referrals. Give a name of an individual when possible, and call ahead to brief the person
- Do report to MSJ Campus Police or the Dean of Students

Don’t
- Don’t interrupt, particularly during the first 20 to 30 seconds of peak anger
- Don’t minimize the situation
- Don’t get into an argument or shouting match
- Don’t blame, ridicule, or use sarcasm
- Don’t touch
- Don’t ignore warning signs that the problem is about to explode
- Don’t ignore your own limitations

Resources

Emergency 911

Campus Police campus phone 513-244-4227 or “0” from campus phone

Dean of Students 513-244-4466

Wellness Center 513-244-4949

If you feel threatened or endangered, call 911!
**Student Care Advisory Team**

Mount St. Joseph University is committed to maintain a safe environment conducive to learning and personal growth. If a student’s behavior causes concern, potentially endangers his or her own welfare or that of others in the university, the Student Care Advisory Team may intervene as a safeguard for everyone involved. The Student Care Advisory Team serves an advisory and consultative board to help the Dean of Students respond rapidly to an expressed concern about a student or to critical or emergency situations involving students. It also serves as a conduit to other helpful university and community services.

A referral to the Student Care Advisory Team can be made by contacting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dean of Students</td>
<td>513-244-4466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator of Residence Life</td>
<td>513-244-4465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of the Learning Center and Disabilities Services</td>
<td>513-244-4202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Project Excel</td>
<td>513-244-4859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Advising and Retention Center</td>
<td>513-244-4828</td>
</tr>
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**Making Referrals at Mount St. Joseph University**

If Student is in crisis (at risk of harm to self or others):

- Call Mount St. Joseph University Police “0” from Campus Phone or 513-244-4226
- During regular business hours M-F, you can also call the Wellness Center: 513-244-4949

If the student is not at risk of harm to self or others, but you would like to make a referral to the Wellness Center Counseling Services:

- Contact Counseling Services at 513-244-4949 or the Director of Wellness at 513-244-4371
- Let the student know that
  - Counseling does not impact or influence academic records
  - Counseling is confidential
  - Walk-ins are welcome

**Anonymous Reports for Sexual Misconduct**

Anonymous reports of sexual discrimination, sexual harassment and/or sexual misconduct may be made by call, text or email:

513-244-TIPS (8472)
Email: 244TIPS@msj.edu