

A Faculty Guide to Encountering Students in Distress or Personal Crisis

Encountering a Student in Distress or Personal Crisis

Faculty teaching in the classroom often have the first opportunity to observe if a student is in some kind of personal distress or crisis. As such, you may be in the position to be the first to extend a "helping hand" to a troubled student. These suggestions are intended to guide you in extending that helping hand.

As an instructor, you may become aware of a student's anxiety, depression, loneliness, marital and family adjustment situations, sexual concerns, feeling of low self-worth, career dilemma, or other situations that are causing the student to be personally distressed or in a troubled mental state.

While this distress results from the student's personal situation, the effects of a troubled personal life sometimes becomes evident in the classroom and may affect not only the student's ability to succeed in the class, but may affect you and other students in the class as well.

Consult with Schoolcraft College Counselors to Determine How You Can Help

As licensed professional counselors, our role is to help you determine the best course of action for addressing your concern. We accomplish this by discussing with you your concerns and brainstorming ways in which you can help. You are not required to reach out to a seemingly troubled student, this is your choice. If the troubled student's behavior is impacting the ability for other students to learn, you may want to consider checking our faculty resource, A Faculty Guide to Managing Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom.

A few reasons why faculty and staff consult with counselors are to:

- Become aware of services and resources available to help with a particular concern.
- Learn how to refer a student to our services.
- Refer students who are dealing with a difficult situation.
- Get ideas about how to prevent a negative situation from starting or escalating.

Indicators of Students in Crisis

Students in crisis may exhibit the following early warning indicators:

- Bizarre/disjointed thoughts
- Concerns expressed from other students
- Depressed/persistent sadness/unexplained crying
- Disruptive classroom behavior

- Disturbing written material/class discussion
- Excessive anxiety/heightened emotional distress
- Hostile, aggressive, or intimidating remarks or behaviors
- Inappropriate display of anger/negative emotions
- Marked change in affect, attendance, or academic performance
- Marked change in mood, behavior, appearance, and/or hygiene
- Self-destructive behavior (cutting, burning, etc.)
- Suicidal remarks or attempts

None of these indicators alone is sufficient for predicting mental health problems, aggression and/or violence. When presented in combination, they may indicate the need for documentation and further analysis to determine an appropriate intervention. This documentation and further analysis is something that should be undertaken with the support of Schoolcraft College Counseling and consultation with your Dean/Associate Dean. You may also submit an online report of your concern at www.schoolcraft.edu/sccares.

First Approach to Helping

Try to talk with the student in a private location, mention you are concerned and site a specific reason why you are concerned.

- Give the individual time to talk about their situation, just listen.
- Use a calm voice when talking to the student.
- Refer the student to Counseling Services.

- Ask the student if he/she would like to talk with a Schoolcraft College counselor who has expertise in helping students to "cope" with a variety of matters that can be troubling.
- Mention that counseling is without fee and is confidential (unless harm is likely).
- If the student would like to talk with a counselor, offer to wait for the student to phone or walk the student to Counseling Services to set up an appointment (assuming this is not a crisis situation which may require more immediate attention).
- If the student prefers to not have you accompany him/her, suggest the student call (734) 462-4429 or email counseling@schoolcraft.edu for an appointment.

When you have had an interaction with a distressed or troubled student, report this to your Dean/Associate Dean and complete the online reporting form at: www.schoolcraft.edu/sccares



Schoolcraft College

www.schoolcraft.edu

■ Significant portions of this document were borrowed from Bucks County Community College

All emergencies or situations of a criminal or threatening nature need to be reported directly to Campus Security Police.

From a cell phone or off-campus 734 462-4424

From a campus phone Ext. 4424