



### IMPORTANT GVSU SUPPORT CONTACTS:

- Grand Valley Police Department .....(616) 331-3255
- University Counseling Center .....(616) 331-3266
- Dean of Students Office/CARE Team .....(616) 331-3585
- Disability Support Resources .....(616) 331-2490
- Housing and Residence Life Office .....(616) 331-2120
- Milton E. Ford LGBT Resource Center .....(616) 331-2530
- Office of Multicultural Affairs .....(616) 331-2177
- Office for Title IX and Institutional Equity.....(616) 331-9530
- Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.....(616) 331-3585
- Padnos International Center.....(616) 331-3898
- CLAS Academic Advising.....(616) 331-8585
- Peter Secchia Military and Veterans Resource Center .....(616) 331-2597
- Center for Women and Gender Equity/Victim Advocate ....(616) 331-2748
- Student Ombuds.....(616) 331-2491

**IMMINENT HARM TO SELF OR OTHERS:  
CALL 911**

Then follow-up with the Dean of Students Office (616) 331-3585 for ongoing support.

## GVSU Faculty and Staff Guide

### For Working with Distressed and Disruptive Students

This guide is designed to assist you in dealing with students whom you consider potentially threatening or dangerous either to themselves, to the campus community, or to you. Fortunately, this type of student situation does not occur often, but it is important that you know help is available and how to access assistance. Do not hesitate to contact appropriate offices for consultation. **Consulting with other university officials concerning community or student safety is not a breach of student confidentiality.**

### Division of Student Affairs CARE Team

The CARE (Coordination, Assistance, Response, and Education) Team addresses reports of troubling (inappropriate, disruptive, or harmful) student behavior in order to recommend proactive approaches aimed at helping students achieve success. The team is represented by a cross section of campus professionals who can address a broad range of student needs, including representatives from:

- |                              |                                                   |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Dean of Students Office      | Student Academic Success Center                   |
| Housing and Residence Life   | Grand Valley State Police Department              |
| Disability Support Resources | Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution |
| University Counseling Center | Office of Civil Rights and Title IX               |
| Student Health Services      | Victim Advocacy                                   |

The CARE Team serves as a central place to report behaviors of concern. To initiate a discussion, you may call the Dean of Students Office at (616) 331-3585 or submit a CARE Report at [www.gvsu.edu/care](http://www.gvsu.edu/care). The CARE Team response is governed by a course of action that balances the best interest of the student with that of the University community.

# WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DISTRESSED

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “DISTRESS”?

Students may exhibit worrisome behaviors that indicate they are coping with a serious mental health problem. Mental health issues can alter the content of students' communication and/or their behavior in the classroom. For example, an otherwise academically successful student may become withdrawn, depressed, and potentially suicidal. The depression may lead to poor grades, lack of attention in class, and other similar behaviors.

## WHAT IS MY ROLE?

As a staff or faculty member, you are in a position to spot someone who may be emotionally distressed. While some stress is expected, especially during peak times of the year or when someone is experiencing multiple life stressors, you may notice someone acting in a way that is inconsistent with your normal experience with that person. Your expressions of interest and concern may be critical factors in getting the individual to seek appropriate help. You may also be able to alert University staff so that an appropriate intervention from various campus supports can be made.

## POSSIBLE SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- Marked change in academic performance or behavior
- Undue aggressiveness
- Exaggerated emotional response that is obviously inappropriate to the situation
- Feelings of depression or hopelessness
- Hyperactivity or very rapid speech
- Marked change in personal hygiene
- Excessive confusion
- Dependency (individual hangs around or makes excessive appointments to see you)
- Strange or bizarre behavior indicating loss of contact with reality
- Verbal or written references to suicide
- Verbal or written references to homicide or assaultive behavior
- Isolation from friends, family, or classmates

## ASSISTANCE AND FOLLOW-UP

If you feel that a person's safety or health is at immediate risk, call 911. This may include situations where a student makes a threat to harm self/others, medical emergencies, severe intoxication, or refusal to accept help. Please refer distressed students to the University Counseling Center (UCC). If you would like help deciding how to proceed with a distressed student, call the UCC or Dean of Students Office for consultation. After calling 911 or consulting, completing a CARE report is an appropriate next step.

## WILL I BE NOTIFIED THAT A STUDENT I REFERRED GOT HELP?

Because of legal and ethical requirements regarding the confidential nature of the client/counselor relationship, Counseling Center staff cannot share whether a student attended a session. Students may choose to give the UCC permission to share information. Also, it is appropriate for you to ask the student if they got assistance. Other offices, such as the CARE Team, may have more freedom to share information and provide feedback when notified about a student of concern; this is a benefit of completing a timely CARE report.

## THE DOs

- DO ask questions and express concern earlier versus later. A crisis may be less likely to happen the sooner support and care is given.
- DO speak with the student privately.
- DO let the student know you are concerned about their welfare.
- DO express your concern in behavioral, nonjudgmental terms.
- DO tell the student you are willing to help.
- DO listen carefully to what the student is describing.
- DO make referrals to the appropriate campus departments that can be the most helpful with the students stressors.
- DO point out that help is available and seeking such help is a sign of strength and courage, rather than of weakness or failure.
- DO speak with the University Counseling Center about why you are bringing or sending a student to their office to seek assistance, especially if there are any concerns about safety.
- DO maintain clear and consistent boundaries and expectations.
- DO recognize your limits.
- DO document the interaction or incident including filing a CARE Report.

## THE DON'TS

- DON'T promise confidentiality (sharing information between faculty and staff and the CARE TEAM is not a violation of FERPA and is not relevant to HIPPA).
- DON'T judge or criticize.
- DON'T ignore unusual behavior.
- DON'T involve yourself beyond the limits of your time or skill.

## RESOURCES

**University Counseling Center (UCC)**  
(616) 331-3266

**Dean of Students Office (DOS)**  
(616) 331-3585

**Grand Valley Police Department (GVPD)**

# WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DISRUPTIVE OR THREATENING

## WHAT IS DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR?

Disruptive behavior interferes with other students, faculty, or staff and their access to an appropriate educational, residential, or work environment. These behaviors are usually a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

## THREATENING BEHAVIOR?

If you feel threatened, “uneasy”, or are the target of hostility you will be helping yourself and others by addressing the problem and seeking help.

### Three Kinds Of Threats:

**Direct:** The easiest to identify since it is obvious.

- Example: “I’m going to hurt you.”

**Conditional:** An expressed intention to harm based on a contingency of actions by others. Often contains “if” or “or”. It is designed to gain control.

- Example: “If I get an F in this class, someone will get hurt.”

**Veiled:** The hardest to identify since the meaning is intentionally unclear. The recipient of the threat gets a bad or negative feeling of danger from an action or a comment.

## WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF DISRUPTIVE OR THREATENING BEHAVIOR?

- Yelling or screaming
- Persistent/unreasonable demands for time/attention
- Written assignments that include inappropriate content ( i.e., sexual or violent)
- Words or actions that have the effect of intimidating or harassing another
- Words or actions that cause another to fear for one’s personal safety
- Threats of physical assault

## HOW SHOULD I DEAL WITH A DISRUPTIVE STUDENT?

Remain calm. Many disruptive situations involve anger. The period of peak anger usually lasts 20-30 seconds. If the person de-escalates, then you can refer to the DOs and DON'Ts listed for further steps to resolve the conflict. If the student does not de-escalate, or threats of violence are made, remove yourself and any other students present from the situation and call 911.

## IF A THREATENING SITUATION EMERGES DURING A CLASS MEETING:

- Seek assistance by contacting GVPD/911.
- Request that the student stop the behavior.
- Ask the student to step out of the classroom.

## THE DOs

- DO ask questions and express concern earlier versus later. A crisis may be less likely to happen the sooner support and care is given.
- DO allow the student to vent and tell you what feels upsetting. Use silence to allow the student to talk it out.
- DO acknowledge the feelings of the individual.
- DO set limits. Explain clearly and directly what behavior is acceptable. “I will be willing to speak with you as soon as you lower your voice.”
- DO be firm, consistent, and honest.
- DO focus on what you can do to help resolve the situation.
- DO offer to make referrals. When possible, give the name of an office or individual who might be able to help.
- DO ask the student to leave the room if disruptive behavior persists.
- DO report the behavior to the Dean of Students Office and/or the Grand Valley Police Department.

## THE DON'Ts

- DON'T interrupt, particularly during the first 20-30 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 safety issues if the student is becoming more agitated.
- DON'T assume you can resolve all situations; call for assistance when needed.

## DOCUMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Disruptive or threatening behavior should be documented.

Write a factual, detailed account of what occurred.

Contact the Dean of Students Office to discuss situations where a student is displaying disruptive behavior. Contact GVPD if you feel threatened or in danger. Acts of violence are preceded by patterns. By identifying and reporting these patterns you enable the institution to assess levels of risk and take appropriate action.

## RESOURCES

Dean of Students Office (DOS)  
(616) 331-3585

Grand Valley Police Department (GVPD)  
(616) 331-3255

## TRAINING

Do you want to feel better prepared to handle emergencies or difficult situations? The member offices of the CARE Team are available to provide training to your offices/departments.

**Red Folder Training:** Discuss information contained in this folder, as well as learn more about resources, confidentiality, and how to make referrals. Contact Emily First at the Dean of Students Office to request a training.

**Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR):** A national suicide intervention training program that teaches you how to talk to students about suicide and refer distressed students to trained professionals. Contact the University Counseling Center for the training schedule or to request a training for a department.

**D's Seminar (Decisive Decisions when Dealing with Distressed, Disruptive, or Dangerous Developments):** Gain the knowledge of what to do if confronted with various workplace/classroom violence situations. Contact Emily First at the Dean of Students Office or the Grand Valley Police Department to request a training.

**Department Emergency Preparedness:** Become prepared to respond from an "all hazards" prospective including fires, medicals, chemical spills. The second half of the presentation provides an awareness level response to active shooter incidents. Contact the Grand Valley Police Department to request a workshop.

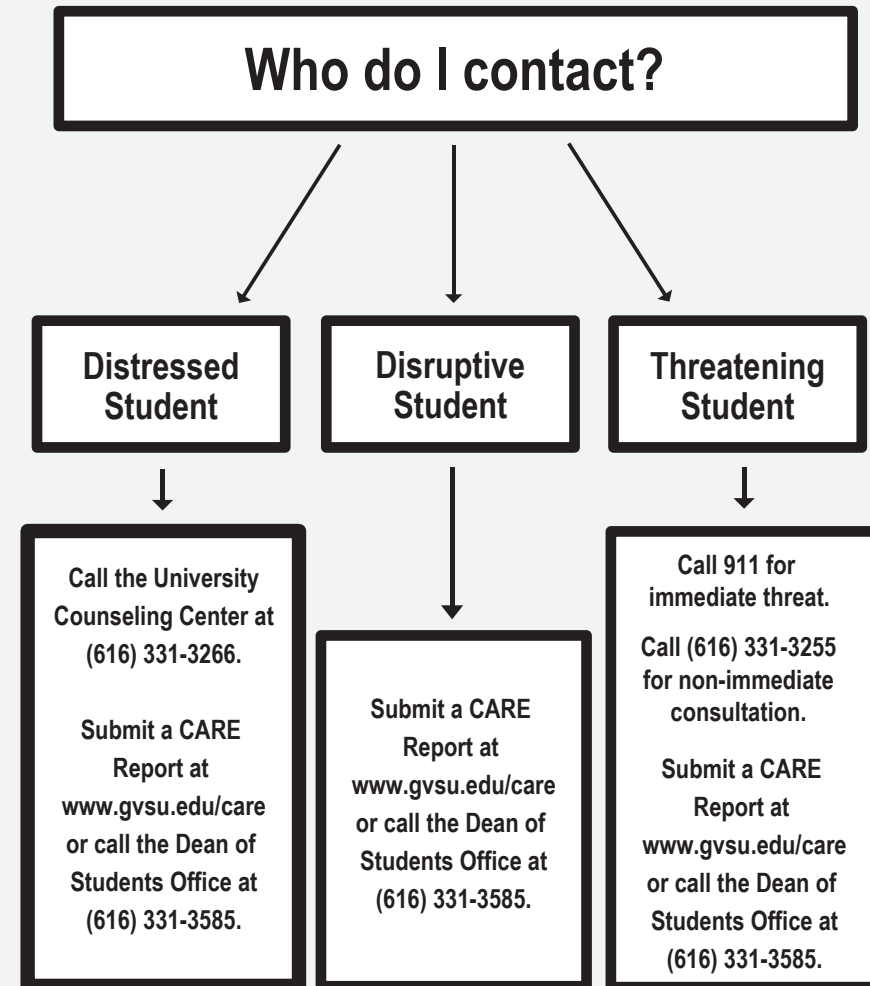
**Active Shooter Engaged!:** This training brings an added component to those who had already taken the Department Emergency Preparedness seminar. This course presents a tabletop exercise geared towards your individual department or job. Contact Grand Valley Police Department to discuss training.

## DAY-TO-DAY SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Be alert and aware, responsible for yourself and your community. If something doesn't feel right, say something! Trust your instincts.
- Download the GV Mental Health app to your smartphone for mental health information and resources at your fingertips.
- Make sure people are in areas in which they belong. If you don't recognize someone and they are in an area they should not be, ask them to identify themselves.
- Keep valuables secure: cell phones, laptops, file cabinets. Lock-up confidential information.
- Do not loan out keys or passwords to anyone. Report lost keys, IDs, or key-cards as soon as possible.
- [www.gvsu.edu/gvpd](http://www.gvsu.edu/gvpd) contains information about emergency preparedness and safety.



## DISTRESSED AND DISRUPTIVE STUDENT FLOW CHART



**IMMINENT HARM TO SELF OR OTHERS:  
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