



## Recognizing Signs of Distress:

(These are the most common signs of distress. Students may present with signs that are not listed.)

### Academic

- Sudden decline in quality of work and grades
- Frequently missed classes and assignments
- Disturbing content in writing or presentations
- Classroom disruptions
- Consistently seeking personal rather than professional advice
- Multiple requests for extensions or special considerations (a change from prior functioning)
- Doesn't respond to repeated requests for contact or meetings
- Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, helplessness, isolation, rage, despair, violence or self-harm

### Physical

- Marked changes in physical appearance like poor grooming or hygiene or sudden changes in weight
- Strange or bizarre behavior indicating loss of contact with reality
- Visibly intoxicated or smelling of alcohol or marijuana
- Rapid speech or manic behavior
- Depressed or lethargic mood or functioning
- Observable signs of injury like facial bruising or cuts

### Psychological

- Self-disclosure of personal distress like family problems, financial difficulties, assault, discrimination or legal difficulties
- Unusual or disproportionate emotional response to events
- Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions
- Verbal abuse like taunting, badgering or intimidation
- Expression of concern about the student by peers

### Safety Risk

- Verbal, written or implied references to suicide, homicide, assault or self-harm behavior
- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Physical violence like shoving, grabbing, assaulting or use of a weapon
- Stalking or harassing
- Communicating threats or disturbing comments in person or via email, text or phone call

## Responding to a student in distress

- **Stay Safe** – If there is an imminent danger to you, the student, or someone else, call 911 or Public Safety (x3311)
- **Take your time** – If this is not an imminently dangerous situation, take time to listen to the student's concerns and how you might be able to help.
- **Listen** – make eye contact, give your full attention, don't interrupt; hear their concerns.
- **Acknowledge** – validate their feelings and what they are experiencing is distressing.
- **Normalize** – their difficulties and challenges, remind them that they are not alone
- **Identify** – why you are concerned for them
- **Ask direct questions** – Don't be afraid to directly ask the student if they are having thoughts of harming or killing themselves or others.
- **Referral** – remind and provide campus resources

## Sexual Misconduct

- Review sexual misconduct information (policy, resources) at QR code below or go to [www.wcupa.edu/sexualmisconduct](http://www.wcupa.edu/sexualmisconduct)
- If a student shares with you that they have experienced sexual misconduct, faculty and staff are required to complete a Sexual Misconduct Report at [www.wcupa.edu/sexualmisconductreport](http://www.wcupa.edu/sexualmisconductreport)
- Reports can be made with Department of Public Safety ([www.wcupa.edu/dps](http://www.wcupa.edu/dps)), or by calling 610.436.3311
- Confidential On-Campus Resources for students:
  - Counseling Center can aid in providing support and assess student's mental health needs ([www.wcupa.edu/counselingcenter](http://www.wcupa.edu/counselingcenter))
  - Student Health Services can assist with medical support ([www.wcupa.edu/StudentHealthServices](http://www.wcupa.edu/StudentHealthServices))
- Off Campus Resources – Crime Victims' Center ([www.cvcofcc.org](http://www.cvcofcc.org)), 24 hour hotline at 610.692.7273
- Not sure how to help? Contact the Title IX Coordinator at 610.436.2433 for guidance and assistance



### Faculty/Staff Resources:

**Any faculty or staff member who has been assaulted should contact Public Safety (610.436.3311) for assistance.**

### OPTIONS AND RESOURCES (For Students only)

- Survivors have the option to file both a criminal report with the police and a report with the University through the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (610.436.2433).
- Anyone can file a report – a survivor of an assault, a witness, or a concerned third party.
- Reports can be submitted at: [www.wcupa.edu/sexualmisconductreport](http://www.wcupa.edu/sexualmisconductreport)



## Disruptive Students

Students may present with behavior that is disorderly, reckless, aggressive, defiant, destructive, threatening, possibly paranoid, and might be perceived as dangerous to self or others. Their behavior interferes with the learning and university environment. If disruptive in the classroom, see the Policy on Disruptive Classroom Behavior online in the policy library. If outside the classroom, contact Public Safety, the CARE Team, or the appropriate Dean of the College.

If student is disruptive but does not pose a threat:

- Ensure safety for all; deal with the student in a calm, non-confrontational manner.
- Set limits; explain how the behavior is inappropriate.
- If the situation escalates, contact Public Safety.
- In all cases above, inform the Chair of your Department and the Dean of your College.

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## The Student Code of Conduct

The Student Code of Conduct is the written policy that governs student behavior. It explains students' rights and responsibilities and the processes that should be followed when misconduct is alleged. The Complete Student Code of Conduct can be found at: [www.wcupa.edu/StudentCodeofConduct](http://www.wcupa.edu/StudentCodeofConduct)



## What about Privacy Laws and Confidentiality?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits communication about a student of concern under the following circumstances:

- Personal identifiable information from an “educational record” may be disclosed to appropriate individuals in connection with a health and safety emergency. Information may be released to parents, police, or others if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student or other at-risk individuals.
- Information can be shared with University personnel when there is a specific need to know and should be limited to the essentials of University business
- Campus Reporting Requirements: All employees are required to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the Office for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. A narrow exception exists for faculty specifically when the sexual misconduct is communicated during a classroom discussion, class writing assignment, or university research. Additionally, employees who are designated “Campus Security Authorities” are required to report on-campus and off-campus student conduct, including active alcohol or drug use or possession, weapon possession, arson, hazing, robbery, theft, assault, hate crimes, stalking, dating or domestic violence, sexual misconduct, manslaughter, and murder to the WCU Police. Everyone is strongly encouraged to report, even if you are not required.

### IF IN DOUBT, REACH OUT

Counseling & Psychological Services 610.436.2301

CARE Support Services 610.436.3089

Public Safety 610.436.3311

**Referring a Student in Distress:**

Does the student need immediate assistance?

**Yes**

The student’s conduct is clearly reckless, disorderly, dangerous or threatening and suggestive of immediate harm to self or others in the community.

**What to do:**

- If there is an imminent danger to you, the student or someone else, call 911 or Public Safety x3311

**I’m Not Sure**

Signs of distress are visible but the severity is unclear. The interaction has left you feeling uneasy or concerned about the student and you’re not sure how to proceed.

**What to do:**

- Consult with the Counseling Center
- Submit a Care Report

**No**

I’m not concerned for the student’s immediate safety but they are having significant academic and/or personal issues and could use support.

**What to do:**

- See our list of campus resources below to connect the student with support on campus.

**Resources for Students in Distress**



**Counseling & Psychological Services  
(Counseling Center)**

610.436.2301

[www.wcupa.edu/CounselingCenter](http://www.wcupa.edu/CounselingCenter)



**CARE Team**

610.436.3089

<https://www.wcupa.edu/services/studentAssistance/CARE>

The purpose of the CARE Team is to identify an alarming behavior and provide support to someone who may have academic and/or personal challenges which may have an impact on a successful college experience. CARE requests your input so we may be proactive in fostering safety, healthy well-being, and academic achievement for our community.

**Additional Resources**

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| Assistant VP for Student Affairs                | 610.436.3086 |
| Center for Trans and Queer Advocacy             | 610.436.3147 |
| Dean of Students                                | 610.436.1074 |
| Exploratory Studies                             | 610.436.3505 |
| LARC (Tutoring, Study Skills)                   | 610.436.2535 |
| Office for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion        | 610.436.2433 |
| Office of Services for Students w/ Disabilities | 610.436.3217 |
| Office of Student Conduct                       | 610.436.3511 |
| Residence Life/On-Campus Housing                | 610.436.3307 |
| Student Assistance                              | 610.436.0165 |
| Student Health Services                         | 610.436.2509 |
| Vice President of Student Affairs               | 610.436.3301 |
| Wellness Promotion                              | 610.436.0730 |

**College Deans:**

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| Arts & Humanities                    | 610.436.2489 |
| Business & Public Management         | 610.436.2930 |
| Education & Social Work              | 610.436.2321 |
| Health Sciences                      | 610.436.2825 |
| Interdisciplinary & Graduate Studies | 610.738.0492 |
| Sciences & Mathematics               | 610.436.3521 |
| University College                   | 610.436.3416 |
| Wells School of Music                | 610.436.2739 |