

# Classroom Disruption

An Advisory from the Dean of Students Office

Classrooms, whether they are online or held in person, deserve to be free of disruption. The classroom could extend to those course-related discussions between an instructor, teaching assistant, or graduate assistant and a student during office hours. In an effort to be proactive and support education in the classroom, the Dean of Students Office offers the following advisory to assist instructors who may encounter a disruptive student.

## What is disruptive behavior?

Disruptive behavior is behavior that a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with normal class activities. This includes in-person and online classes, and course-related discussion between a student and instructor/teaching assistant/graduate assistant during office hours

## Examples of Disruptive Behaviors

- Repeatedly entering and leaving the classroom without authorization.
- Making loud or distracting noises.
- Persisting in speaking without being recognized.
- Resorting to physical threats or personal insults.

## How should I respond to a student who is being disruptive?

Remain calm and know who to call for assistance. Find someone to stay with the student while calls are made. See referral numbers on the front of this publication.

Remember that it is NOT your responsibility to provide the professional help needed for troubled or disruptive students. You need only make the necessary contact on their behalf.

## The Dos

- Share with your students your explicit expectations for conduct in the classroom, sooner rather than later.
- Serve as a role model for the conduct you expect from students.
- If inappropriate behavior is occurring, offer general words or caution (e.g., we have too many conversations happening at the moment. Let's all focus on one topic).

- If the behavior is inappropriate, but not disruptive, speak with the student after class. Give the student a specific example of the behavior you want them to modify or eliminate.
- In the rare case when you need to address the student during class, do it firmly and with respect.
- A student who persists in disrupting a class may be directed to leave the classroom for the remainder of the period.
- If disruption is serious, and other reasonable measures have failed, the class may be adjourned and the University Police called (852-6111).
- Document and report disruptive incidents promptly, even if they seem minor.

## The Don'ts

- DON'T make it a public argument or use harsh language.
- DON'T blame, ridicule, or use sarcasm.
- DON'T use force or threats of force (except in immediate self-defense).
- DON'T ignore your own limitations.

**Remember  
SAFETY FIRST.  
If you are  
concerned for  
your own or  
other's safety call  
University Police  
852-6111 or  
911.**

# FAQ on Helping Students in Distress

## What are some signs that a student may be in distress?

A student in distress may not be disruptive to others, but may exhibit behaviors which indicate something is wrong. Behaviors may include:

- Serious grade problems or a dramatic change in performance.
- Excessive absences or inconsistent attendance.
- Unusual or changed patterns of interaction—avoiding participation, excessive anxiety when called upon, domination of discussions.
- Other characteristics that suggest the student is having trouble managing stress—depressed, lethargic, or rapid speech; swollen, red eyes; marked change in personal dress and hygiene; sleeping during class.
- Repeated requests for special consideration, especially if the student appears uncomfortable or highly emotional while disclosing the circumstances prompting the request.
- New or repeated behavior which interferes with the instructor's effective management of the immediate environment.
- Unusual or exaggerated emotional responses which appear inappropriate to the situation, irritability, or outbursts of anger.

## How should I respond to a student that is troubled or showing signs of distress?

For students who are mildly or moderately troubled, you can choose to respond to them in the following ways:

- Deal directly with the behavior/problem according to classroom protocol.
- Address the situation privately with the individual(s).
- Consult with a colleague, Department Head, the Dean of Students Office, the Counseling Center, or Campus Health Services.
- Refer the student to an appropriate University resource. See referral phone numbers in this publication for help.

## What types of warning signs are most serious?

Severely troubled or disruptive students may exhibit behaviors that signify an immediate crisis and necessitate emergency care such as:

- Highly disruptive behavior (e.g., hostility, aggression, violence).
- Inability to communicate clearly (e.g., garbled, slurred speech; unconnected, disjointed, or rambling thoughts).
- Loss of contact with reality (e.g., seeing or hearing things that others cannot see or hear; beliefs or actions greatly at odds with reality or probability).
- Stalking behaviors (threatening behavior, unwanted advances or communication).
- Inappropriate communications (e.g., including threatening letters, e-mail messages, harassment).
- Overtly suicidal thoughts (expression of a specific plan including referring to suicide as a current option or in a written assignment, statements of hopelessness, death allusions, thoughts of burdening others, and/or not belonging).
- Threats to harm self or others.

# Helping Students in Distress

## Reporting Guide for Faculty and Staff



**Troubled Student**  
A student who appears confused, very sad, highly anxious, irritable, lacks motivation and/or concentration: may be thinking about suicide.



**Dean of Students.....852-5787**  
**or**  
**Counseling (Belknap).....852-6585**  
**Counseling (HSC).....852-0996**

**Emergency .....911**

It is not a violation of FERPA to inform University Police, the Dean of Students Office, or other consultative offices listed when reporting an incident of a student in distress.

If you are dealing with students in distress:

- Be aware of the location.
- If you are concerned for your safety or the safety of others, call 911 immediately.
- If the student is causing a disruption to the classroom or office environment but does not pose a threat:

Review the classroom disruption advisory on the inside of this publication.

**When in doubt,  
call University Police  
852-6111**

2019-2020

### Student Care Team

Dean of Students Office ..... 852-5787  
<https://louisville.edu/dos/faculty/staff/student-care-team>

### 24-Hour Consultation

University Police ..... 852-6111  
Centerstone Crisis and Information\*... 589-4313

*\*Notify an appropriate University official after consultation.*

### Consultation or Questions

Campus Health Services (Belknap)..... 852-6479  
Campus Health Services (HSC) ..... 852-6446  
Counseling Center (Belknap)..... 852-6585  
Counseling Center (HSC)..... 852-0996  
Disability Resource Center..... 852-6938  
Housing..... 852-6636  
PEACC ..... 852-2663

### Administrative/Conduct

Dean of Students Office ..... 852-5787

### Academic Concerns

Student Grievance Officer ..... 852-6976  
Student Advocate ..... 852-5787

## Other Resources

### Response Guide for Difficult Student Situations

#### When responding to a difficult student situation:

- Don't personalize the situation: take a breath and look at the situation as objectively as possible.
- Maintain records of interactions with difficult students.
- Identify the specific behavior of concern.
- Avoid creating an adversarial relationship.
- Look for the educational opportunity.
- An educational conversation from a University official can have a lasting impact on a student. Look for the opportunity to dialogue about the situation.
- Maintain professional communication.
- Address inappropriate, disruptive, or concerning behavior from the beginning.
- If you have a concern, do not wait to see if it happens again.

#### Use statements:

- "I am happy to discuss this or speak with you about this matter; however, I do not/will not speak with another adult who is yelling (cursing, etc.)."
- "As an educator, I do not/will not speak to someone who uses vulgar/crass/inappropriate/disrespectful language."
- "I recognize how frustrated you are and I want to work with you. We need to take a step back for a minute so we can look at this situation together."

For additional information about responding to specific difficult student situations, please visit <http://louisville.edu/dos/faculty/staff/difficult-student-guide>

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EMERGENCY**

### Reporting a Concern to SCT

For more information about SCT, contact the Dean of Students Office.  
852-5787  
<https://louisville.edu/dos/forms/sctreporting>

### Student Care Team (SCT)

**The purpose** of the Student Care Team is to provide a regular opportunity for communication between departments, ensuring that all the resources of the University of Louisville are available to students in crisis.

### Request QPR Training

To request QPR Training for your department or group, please submit the online request form at <http://louisville.edu/dos/facultystaff/qpr-training>

### What is QPR Training?

QPR stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer — 3 simple steps that anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide.

### Suicide Prevention Training

### Gender Based Harassment—Title IX

#### Policy and/or Objective

The University of Louisville's Title IX Policy reflects the commitment to maintain a community that is free from harassment based on gender. Harassment based upon gender is not acceptable at the University and is in violation of Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972. It is also inconsistent with the University's commitment to excellence and respect for all individuals.

If you have a concern about a harassment situation, contact the Title IX coordinator or a deputy coordinator.

#### Deputy Title IX Coordinator (Complaints against Students)

Dean of Students Office  
2100 S. Floyd Street  
Student Activities Center – W301  
Louisville, KY 40208  
Phone: (502) 852-5787  
email: [dos@louisville.edu](mailto:dos@louisville.edu)

#### Deputy Title IX Coordinator (Complaints against Employees)

Human Resources  
1980 Arthur Street  
Louisville, KY 40208-2770  
Phone: (502) 852-6688  
email: [employeerelations@louisville.edu](mailto:employeerelations@louisville.edu)

#### Deputy Title IX Coordinator (Complaints against Non-University Community Members)

University of Louisville Police Department  
Floyd Street Parking Garage  
Suite 100  
Louisville, KY 40292  
Phone: (502) 852-7283  
email: [uofpolicechief@louisville.edu](mailto:uofpolicechief@louisville.edu)



**ConcernCenter**