

Working with Distressed Students: A Decision-Making Tree for Faculty and Staff

STUDENTS OF CONCERN (SOC)
www.truman.edu/students-of-concern/



TRUMAN RESOURCES

STUDENTS OF CONCERN TEAM: The SOC Team assesses and coordinates responses to issues and concerns about students requiring intervention in order to help them achieve success at Truman, and help the campus community members feel safe and supported. Addressed concerns may include specific incidents or general concerns about behavior of a student or a group of students. When a referral is made (www.truman.edu/students-of-concern/), the team will attempt to determine what is happening and what type of assistance the student may need. Intervention will occur in the least intrusive manner appropriate in providing that assistance.

MEMBERS OF THE STUDENTS OF CONCERN TEAM

- **Dr. Tyana Lange**, Chair
Vice President of Student Engagement and Marketing
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- **Zac Burden**
Director of Citizenship and Conduct
(660) 785-4141
- **Chief Chad Gooch**
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- **Brian Reeves**
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- **Dr. Jordan Palmer**, D.O.
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- **Julie Sneddon**
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- **Dr. Jamie Van Boxel**
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(660) 785-4227
- **Mark Herrmann**, J.D.
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(660) 785-4121



You want to help.

As a Truman State University faculty or staff member, you sometimes encounter students in distress. This information will help you know what to look for, recognize the warning signs and take a course of action to get students the assistance they need.

STUDENT IS UNDER DISTRESS.

SIGNS OF DISTRESS (include, but are not limited to):

- Nervousness, agitation, or irritability
- Infrequent class attendance
- Crying
- Changes in academic performance
- Changes in personal or classroom relationships
- Deterioration in hygiene
- Undue aggressive or abrasive behavior
- Fearfulness
- Dependency (e.g., student who is excessively clingy)
- Frequent alcohol and/or drug use

EXPRESS YOUR CONCERNS TO THE STUDENT, POINTING OUT YOUR OBSERVATIONS AND ASKING ABOUT THE SITUATION.

ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT THE STUDENT'S SAFETY OR DO YOU SEE POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS?

WARNING SIGNS (include, but are not limited to):

- Withdrawal from others (isolation)
- Talks about or threatens suicide
- Makes statements such as "I want this all to end" or "I can't go on anymore"
- Significant confusion
- Behavior is bizarre, alarming and/or dangerous
- Makes statements about hurting or killing others
- Marked change in behavior, mood and/or hygiene
- Appears depressed (frequent crying, insomnia, oversleeping, weight loss/gain, loss of pleasure)
- Appears/reports hopelessness or helplessness
- Engagement in self-harm (e.g., cutting)

1. **DIRECTLY** ask student about your concerns and/or warning signs.
2. **DIRECTLY** ask student about suicide and/or homicide as it relates to the displayed warning sign(s).

YES

NO

DO YOU BELIEVE THERE IS IMMINENT DANGER?

YES, IMMINENT DANGER IS CLEARLY PRESENT.

EXAMPLES

- Student found unconscious or unresponsive
- Student reports ingesting pills beyond the recommended dose (whether the student states it is a suicide attempt or not)
- Student is threatening immediate danger to self (e.g., threatening to jump out a window, ingest pills, shoot self)
- Student attempts, or threatens, to cause physical harm to someone else (or to people in general)

UNCLEAR WHETHER IMMINENT DANGER IS PRESENT

EXAMPLES

- Student reports a history of self-injurious behavior (e.g., cutting or burning) and now states a desire to engage in this behavior again.
- Student makes statements that are suggestive of suicidal/homicidal thinking that are not overtly indicative of imminent danger (e.g., I don't know if I can keep going).
- Student appears emotionally distraught and does not respond to your attempts to calm him/her.

NO, IMMINENT DANGER IS CLEARLY NOT PRESENT

EXAMPLES

- You observe a student crying after getting off the phone during a class break, she reports that she is sad about the end of a romantic relationship; she denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs.
- A student is struggling in your class due to academic skill deficits and test anxiety; he denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs.

**IMMEDIATELY CALL
POLICE AT 911.**

**INFORM YOUR
SUPERVISOR OF THE
SITUATION.
WRITE DOWN**

1. Relevant details about the situation (who, what, when, where)
2. Any background information you have about the student's difficulties
3. A number where you can be reached

Give a copy to University Police (to assist emergency treatment providers), a copy to your supervisor, and keep a copy yourself.

**REPORT THE INCIDENT
TO THE STUDENTS OF
CONCERN TEAM**

at truman.edu/students-of-concern.

**The University
Counseling Services
(660-785-4014) is
available for ongoing
consultations
(as needed) to help
address the impact
of the situation.**

- Student experiences a sudden stressful event (e.g., death, breakup, divorce) and seems emotionally unstable/inconsolable, or the student's response appears unusual (e.g., uncontrollable crying over a failed exam, no apparent response to the death of immediate family member).
- Student's work, assignments and/or communications contain material that raises concerns about suicide, homicide and/or violence.

**CALL UNIVERSITY
COUNSELING SERVICES**

and ask to consult with a counselor (660-785-4014). Do not email. This situation requires an immediate response. If the situation occurs after normal business hours call 988.

**PROVIDE ALL THE
RELEVANT INFORMATION**

you have about the student and situation to the counselor; if you are a faculty member you may have had the opportunity to observe the student over time, and with guidance, you can provide valuable information about the student's mental health.

**INFORM YOUR
SUPERVISOR** of the situation.

Document relevant details about the situation (who, what, when, where) and any background information you have about the student's difficulties. Keep a copy of this documentation.

**SUBMIT THE INCIDENT
TO THE STUDENTS OF
CONCERN TEAM**

at truman.edu/students-of-concern/ or contact any team member.

As much as you and the student are comfortable, **listen and provide support**; but do not become the student's counselor/therapist.

**DISCUSS COUNSELING
SERVICES AND/OR OTHER
UNIVERSITY RESOURCES**

that might be helpful and address any concerns the student might have about these resources. For academic issues, consider contacting the Center for Academic Excellence (785-7403) or the student's academic advisor.

**SHOULD YOU DECIDE TO
REFER TO UNIVERSITY
COUNSELING SERVICES:**

- Know that University Counseling Services would like to hear your concerns about the student and your thoughts about the urgency of the situation.
- Consider calling with the student or accompanying the student to University Counseling Services to initiate counseling services.
- Continue to follow up with the student as appropriate; contact University Counseling Services if you observe a significant change in student's behavior.

NOTE:

If at any point you believe the student's "Imminent Danger" status has changed, return to the "Imminent Danger" steps outlined in this decision-making tree.