

Viterbo University's Reference to Assist Students in Distress

Indicators of Distress: Be aware of the following indicators of distress. Look for groupings, frequency, duration and severity – not just isolated symptoms.

Academic Indicators	Physical Indicators	Psychological Indicators	Safety Risk Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sudden decline in quality of work and grades ➤ Repeated absences ➤ Disorganized performance ➤ Multiple requests for extensions ➤ Overly demanding of faculty and staff time and attention ➤ You find yourself doing more personal rather than academic counseling during office hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Marked changes in physical appearance including deterioration in grooming, hygiene, or weight loss/gain ➤ Excessive fatigue/sleep disturbance ➤ Intoxication, hangovers, or smelling of alcohol ➤ Disoriented or “out of it” ➤ Garbled, tangential, disconnected, or slurred speech ➤ Behavior is out of context or bizarre ➤ Delusions and paranoia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Self-disclosure of personal distress such as family problems, financial difficulties, contemplating suicide, grief ➤ Unusual/disproportional emotional response to events ➤ Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions ➤ Irritability or unusual apathy ➤ Verbal abuse (e.g., taunting, badgering, intimidation) ➤ Expressions of concern about the student by his/her peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unprovoked anger or hostility ➤ Physical violence (shoving, grabbing, assault, use of weapon) ➤ Implying or making a direct threat to harm self or others ➤ Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, rage, worthlessness, isolation, despair, acting out, suicidal ideations/violent behaviors – a “cry for help” ➤ Stalking or harassing ➤ Communicating threats via email, correspondence, testing, or phone calls

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Resources & Tips

Use the tips below to help you refer the student to one of the resources listed to the right.

- **Safety First:** The welfare of the campus community is the top priority when a student displays threatening or potentially violent behavior. Do not hesitate to call for help.
- **Listen Sensitively and Carefully:** Use a non-confrontational approach, and a calm voice. Avoid threatening, humiliating, and intimidating responses.
- **Be Proactive:** Engage students early on, setting limits on disruptive behavior.
- **Be Direct:** Don't be afraid to ask students directly if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, feeling confused, or having thoughts of harming themselves or others.
- **Follow Through:** Direct the student to the physical location of the identified resource.
- **Consultation & Documentation:** Always document your interactions with distressed students and consult with your department chair/supervisor after any incident.

Campus Resources for Students/Faculty/Staff	
Campus Safety 5 Student Development Center Outpost: Security Desk, Student Union	608-796-3911 Or x3911
Counseling Services 4 Student Development Center Monday, Wednesday (8am-6pm) Tuesday, Thursday (8am-5pm) Friday (8am-3pm) Open Crisis Hour: 2pm daily	608-796-3808 Or 608-796-3825
Disability Services/Academic Resource Center 332 Murphy Center, Weekdays 8am-5pm	608-796-3190 Or 608-796-3194
Health Services 3 Student Development Center Weekdays 8am-5pm	608-796-3806
Residence Life 115 Marian Hall, adjacent to the Hawk's Nest	608-796-3116 Or 608-796-3400 (24/7)
Vice President for Student Affairs 2 Student Development Center Weekdays 8am-5pm	608-796-3825 Or 608-796-3801
Behavioral Intervention Team 2 Student Development Center, Weekdays 8am-5pm Chairperson: Vice President for Student Affairs	608-796-3801
Emergency Response Task Force 2 Student Development Center, Weekdays 8am-5pm Chairperson: Vice President for Student Affairs	608-796-3801

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Response Protocol: Follow the chart to determine who to contact when faced with a distressed or distressing student.

