ASSISTING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS
SEE SOMETHING. SAY SOMETHING. DO SOMETHING.

SEE SOMETHING.
UMD faculty/staff and graduate research/teaching assistants are in a unique position to demonstrate compassion and empathy for UMD students in distress. Both undergraduate and graduate students may feel alone, isolated, and even hopeless when faced with challenges in their academic and personal lives. These feelings can easily disrupt academic performance and may lead to dysfunctional coping and other serious consequences.

You may be the first person to SEE SOMETHING distressing in a student since you have frequent and prolonged contact with them. As members of the UMD community, it is important that we act with compassion.

DO SOMETHING.
Sometimes students cannot, or will not turn to family or friends. DO SOMETHING. Your expression of concern may be a critical factor in saving a student’s academic career or even their life.

This folder can help you recognize symptoms of student distress and identify appropriate referrals to campus resources.

SAY SOMETHING.
Students exhibiting troubling behaviors in your presence are likely having difficulties in other areas of their lives including the classroom, with roommates, with family, and even in social settings.

Trust your instincts and SAY SOMETHING if a student leaves you feeling worried, alarmed or threatened.

WHAT ABOUT PRIVACY?
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits communication about a student of concern in connection with a health and safety emergency. Observations of a student’s conduct or statements made by a student are not FERPA protected.

Appropriate consideration for student privacy should be given before information is shared with people other than those suggested in this Folder, and questions about when such disclosure is appropriate can be answered by University Office of General Counsel. Faculty and graduate assistants are Responsible University Employees (see OCRSM.UMD.EDU).

INDICATORS OF DISTRESS
Use the following chart to identify a student in distress. Look for groupings, frequency, duration and severity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC</th>
<th>PHYSICAL</th>
<th>PSYCHOLOGICAL</th>
<th>SAFETY RISK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sudden decline in quality of work and grades</td>
<td>• Marked changes in physical appearance (e.g., grooming or hygiene deterioration, weight loss/gain)</td>
<td>• Self-disclosure of personal distress (e.g., family or financial problems, grief, suicidal thoughts)</td>
<td>• Unprovoked anger or hostility</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Repeated absences</td>
<td>• Excessive fatigue or sleep disturbance</td>
<td>• Unusual/disproportionate emotional response to events</td>
<td>• Physical violence (e.g., shoving, grabbing, assault, use of weapons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disorganized performance</td>
<td>• Intoxication, hangovers, or smelling of alcohol</td>
<td>• Excessive tearfulness or panic reactions</td>
<td>• Implying or making direct threat to harm self or others</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Multiple requests for extensions</td>
<td>• Disoriented or “out of it”</td>
<td>• Irritability or unusual apathy</td>
<td>• Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, rage, worthlessness, isolation, despair, acting out, suicidal ideations/violent behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Overly demanding of faculty’s or staff’s time and attention.</td>
<td>• Garbled, tangential, disconnected, or slurred speech</td>
<td>• Verbal abuse (e.g., taunting, badgering, intimidation)</td>
<td>• Stalking or harassing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bizarre content in writings or presentations</td>
<td>• Behavior is out of context or bizarre</td>
<td>• Concern from peers</td>
<td>• Communicating threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You find yourself providing more personal than academic support</td>
<td>• Delusions and paranoia</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### RESPONSE PROTOCOL

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

**Is the student a danger to self, or others, or does the student need immediate assistance for any reason?**

**YES**
The student’s conduct is clearly and imminently reckless, disorderly, dangerous or threatening including self-harm behavior or having a weapon.

- **Call 911 or**
  - University Police 301-405-3555

After speaking with police report the concern to:
- BETA Team
  - 301-314-2382
  - beta@umd.edu

**I’M NOT SURE**
The student shows signs of distress but I am unsure how serious it is. My interaction has left me feeling uneasy and/or concerned about the student.

- **During Business Hours**
  - Call the Counseling Center for consultation at 301-314-7651 or GS Academic Counselor 301-405-3644 or BETA Team 301-314-2382 beta@umd.edu

**NO**
I am not concerned for the student’s immediate safety, but he/she is having significant academic and/or personal issues and could use some support.

- **Refer the student to an appropriate campus resource.**
  - Walk student to Counseling Center
  - See options on the right.

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### TIPS

**PREPARING TO REACH OUT**

- Know the available campus resources and the referral process.
- Review information on privacy rules.
- If safe, meet privately and always allow sufficient time to meet.
- Ensure your safety.
- If you decide not to have direct contact with the student, refer the incident to your college dean. Best if can have conversation with student.
- Contact UMCP PD if a student expresses a direct threat to self or others, or acts in a bizarre, highly irrational and disruptive way.

**CONNECTING WITH THE STUDENT**

- Clearly express your concerns focusing on the behavior in nondisparaging terms.
- Allow the student to talk.
- Do not challenge or become argumentative with the student.
- Ask directly if the student wants to hurt him/herself or others.
- Respect the student’s privacy without making false promises of confidentiality.
- Document all incidents and attempts to resolve the situation.

**MAKING THE REFERRAL**

- Recommend services and provide direct referrals; assist student in contacting resources.
- Frame any decision to seek and accept help as an intelligent choice.
- Make sure the student understands what actions are necessary.
- Be frank with the student about your limits (e.g., time, expertise).
- Encourage and assist the student to make and keep an appointment and set a follow-up meeting with the student.

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### RESOURCES

**ON CAMPUS**

- Vice President Student Affairs 301-314-8430
- GS Academic Counselor 301-405-0296
- University Health Center 301-314-8106
- University Counseling Center 301-314-7651
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 301-314-8170
- Title IX/Sexual Harassment Office 301-405-1142
- Office of Student Conduct 301-314-8204
- Accessibility & Disability Service 301-314-7682
- CARE To Stop Violence 301-314-2222
- International Student & Scholars Services (ISSS) 301-314-7740
- LGBT Equity Center 301-405-8720
- GLAO/Undergraduate LAO 301-405-5807
- Veteran Student Life 301-314-0073

**IN THE COMMUNITY**

- College Park Police Department 301-405-3555
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-8255
- The Trevor Project 866-488-7386
- Prince George’s Community Hospital 301-618-2000

**TRAININGS/LINKS**

- Kognito Training  www.counseling.umd.edu/kognito
- Mental Health First Aid Training  www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline  www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- Undergraduate Advising Reps  www.ugst.umd.edu/car
- Title IX/OCRSM Training  www.ocrsm.umd.edu