

# MUSKINGUM UNIVERSITY RED FOLDER

A quick reference guide to recognizing, responding to, and referring students who are distressed.

**RECOGNIZE** **Recognize distress.** Muskingum faculty and staff are in a position where they have frequent contact with students and may be the first to see that something is off.

## ACADEMIC

- Sudden decline in quality of work or grade
- Repeated absences/tardies
- Disturbing content in writing or presentations, such as violence or death
- Multiple requests for extension/special considerations
- Consistently seeking personal rather than professional advice
- Classroom disruptions
- Doesn't respond to repeated requests for meetings

## PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Self disclosure of personal distress, such as family problems, financial challenges, depression, grief, thoughts of suicide
- Excessive reactions such as tearfulness, panic, irritability, or unusual apathy
- Verbal abuse, such as taunting, badgering, intimidation
- Unusual/disproportionate emotional responses to events
- Expressions of concern about the student by their peers

## PHYSICAL

- Changes in appearance including deterioration in grooming, hygiene, and weight loss
- Excessive fatigue/sleep
- Intoxication, hangovers, smelling of alcohol/marijuana
- Rapid speech or manic behavior
- Depressed, lethargic mood or functioning
- Disoriented or strange behavior indicating loss of grip on reality
- Cuts, bruises, burns, or other injuries

## SAFETY RISK

- Unprovoked anger, hostility, or physical violence
- Stalking or harassing
- Making threats, sharing disturbing comments via email/texts/posts/etc.

**RESPOND** **Use these important tips when responding to a distressed student:**

- ✓ **Safety first:** If there is an imminent danger to the student, you, or others, call Campus Police (8155) or 911.
- ✓ **Be proactive:** If you notice that something seems off, engage students early on. Waiting could mean that the problem gets worse before you see them again.
- ✓ **Stay calm:** Take a few deep breaths. Use a calm voice when talking or asking questions.
- ✓ **Ask direct questions:** Inquire directly if the student is having thoughts of harming themselves or others.
- ✓ **Active listening:** Give the student your full attention. Restate or summarize what the students say so they feel understood.
- ✓ **Seek consultation:** You are not alone. See a list of resources on the reverse side of this sheet that can help support you.

# RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Follow the chart below to best determine who to contact when faced with a student or colleague who is distressed, disruptive, or in crisis.

