

# RED FOLDER

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The Student Personal Counseling Center and  
Office of Student Affairs

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



**RECOGNIZE**



**RESPOND**



**REFER**

## HOW TO USE:

### 1. Recognize indicators of distress

Common indicators are listed inside.  
Students may present with indicators not listed.

### 2. Respond appropriately

Each situation is unique. Use the tips  
and decision tree to determine the most  
appropriate response.

### 3. Refer the student

Use the list of resources on back cover  
to refer the student to the most  
appropriate campus resource.



# RECOGNIZE

## Indicators of Distressed Students

Look for groupings, frequency, and severity of behaviors, not just isolated symptoms.

### Academic

- Sudden decline in quality of work and grades
- Frequently missed classes and assignments
- Disturbing content in writing or presentations
- Classroom disruptions
- Consistently seeking personal rather than professional advice
- Multiple requests for extensions/special considerations (a change from prior functioning)
- Doesn't respond to repeated requests for contact/meetings

### Physical

- Marked changes in physical appearance (e.g., poor grooming/hygiene or sudden weight loss/gain)
- Strange or bizarre behavior indicating loss of contact with reality
- Visibly intoxicated or smelling of alcohol or marijuana
- Rapid speech or manic behavior
- Depressed or lethargic mood or functioning
- Observable signs of injury (e.g., facial bruising or cuts)

### Psychological

- Self-disclosure of personal distress (e.g., family problems, financial difficulties, assault, discrimination, legal difficulties)
- Unusual/disproportionate emotional response to events
- Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions
- Verbal abuse (e.g., taunting, badgering, intimidation)
- Expressions of concern about the student by peers

### Safety Risk

- Verbal, written, or implied references to suicide, homicide, assault or self-injurious behaviors
- Unprovoked anger or hostility/physical violence (e.g., shoving, grabbing, assaulting, use of weapon)
- Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, helplessness, isolation, rage, despair, violence, self-injury
- Stalking or harassing
- Communicating threats/disturbing comments via email, correspondence, texting or phone call



# RESPOND

Use these tips to determine the most appropriate response for a distressed student.

## Mandatory Reporting

In addition to referring a student to resources, any sexual or gender-based harassment or assault requires mandated reporting. For questions regarding mandated reporting, please contact the Office of Student Affairs at (215) 503-6335.

### Stay Safe

Call TJU Public Safety (215-955-8888) or 911 if there is an imminent danger to the student, you, or anyone else.

### Use Active Listening

Make eye contact, give your full attention. Restate what the student says to make sure you understand what is causing the distress and/or what they are asking for help with.

### Stay Calm

Take a few deep breaths to calm yourself. Use a calm voice when talking and asking questions.

### Ask Direct Questions

Don't be afraid to directly ask the student if they are having thoughts of harming themselves or others (by asking, you are **not** instilling the thought).

### Take Your Time

If this is NOT an imminently dangerous situation, take time to think through what might be the most helpful next step.

### Give Concrete Help

Help get them to the next step (e.g., contact the academic advisor with the student to make an appointment; help them call SPCC to schedule an appointment).

### Seek Consultation

You are not alone. Ask those around you for help. Consult with a colleague, call another office on campus (see resources).



# REFER

Follow the decision tree to determine who to contact when you are concerned about a student who is distressed and/or disruptive. Emergency and campus resources are listed.

Is the student a danger to themselves/others OR does the student need some other assistance?

Yes

The student's conduct is clearly dangerous or threatening, including self-harm or harm to others.

Call 911 or Public Safety: 215-955-8888.

No

I am not concerned for anyone's immediate safety, but the student is having significant academic and/or personal issues and could use some support.

Refer student to campus resources, as appropriate.

I'm Not Sure

The student is with me currently and shows signs of distress, but it is not clear how serious it is. I feel uneasy and/or really concerned about the student.

Call SPCC 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.: 215-955-4357. If after 5 p.m. or a weekend, go to Jeff ER, Main Hospital, at 10th & Sansom and ask for the Psychiatry Resident On Call. Or call: (215) 955-6060 for operator

The student is **not** with me currently, but I am concerned about what they said (in an email/call) OR what they did (acted bizarrely, were aggressive/disruptive) OR how they looked (unkempt, unwashed, or as if drugged/drank).

Report to JeffBIT. If after 5 p.m. or a weekend contact the Administrator On Call.

## Emergency Resources

TJU Public Safety  
215-955-8888 or 811

Philadelphia Police - 911

National Suicide Prevention Hotline  
1-800-273-TALK

Women Organized Against Rape (WOAR)  
215-985-3333

## Urgent Resources

Student Personal Counseling Center  
215-955-HELP (4357)  
Emergency Pager 1-877-656-7287  
833 Chestnut, Suite 230

Administrator On Call  
SKMC 877-656-4337  
Center City Colleges 877-656-4063

JeffBIT Behavioral Intervention Team  
[www.jefferson.edu/jeffbit](http://www.jefferson.edu/jeffbit)  
Submit a report online or email:  
[behavior.intervention@jefferson.edu](mailto:behavior.intervention@jefferson.edu)

Office of Student Affairs  
Edison Building, Suite 1120  
215-503-6335

SKMC Office of Student Affairs and Career Counseling  
College Building, Suite 116  
215-503-6988

## What is JeffBIT?

Thomas Jefferson University created a Behavioral Intervention Team (JeffBIT) to provide support to faculty and students to help students displaying concerning, disruptive or inappropriate behavior that should be addressed but does not require immediate follow-up.

## Additional Resources

Jefferson Occupational Health Network  
833 Chestnut, Suite 205  
215-955-6835

Housing and Residence Life  
Orlowitz Residence, Suite 103  
215-955-8913

Student Accessibility Services  
Edison Building, Suite 1120  
215-503-6335

Office of International Affairs  
Jefferson Alumni Hall, Room M-70  
215-503-4335

Career Development Center  
Edison Building, Suite 1120  
215-503-5805

Sexual Misconduct/Title IX Reports  
[www.jefferson.edu/titleix](http://www.jefferson.edu/titleix)  
Title IX Coordinator - 215-951-6830

Confidential Reporting  
Jefferson Alertline: (888) 5-COMPLY  
or [Jefferson.Alertline.com](http://Jefferson.Alertline.com)

Academic Support Services  
Edison Building, Suite 1120  
215-503-2787