

# HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

## CARE TEAM

The **Consultation Assessment Response & Education (CARE)** team is an interdisciplinary group of professionals at the University of Washington Tacoma that meets regularly to discuss, assess, and, when necessary, intervene in situations involving students of concern.

## SAFECAMPUS

The University of Washington's violence-prevention and response program that supports students, staff, faculty and community members.

**Call SafeCampus anytime**—no matter where you work or study—to anonymously discuss safety and well-being concerns for yourself or others.

206-685-7233

AVAILABLE 24 HOURS / 7 DAYS A WEEK

[uw.edu/safecampus](http://uw.edu/safecampus)

**IN URGENT SITUATIONS, CALL 911**

## RESOURCES

**Campus Safety & Security**  
253-692-4416

**Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Life**  
and **Student Conduct & Academic Integrity**  
253-692-4901

**Office of Student Advocacy & Support**  
253-692-5934

**Psychological & Wellness Services**  
253-692-4522



STUDENT AFFAIRS

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON | TACOMA

## REFERRALS

**Students in distress** are those who are displaying behavior that may get in the way of their success (See Indicators of Distress). **Anyone is strongly encouraged to contact the CARE Team if they are concerned about the well-being or safety of a student or the community or if they have reason to believe that a student may pose a direct threat to themselves or others.** A report may be referred to the **CARE Team** for consideration.

For emergencies, university and community members are encouraged to activate the appropriate emergency response by calling **Campus Safety & Security** 253-692-4416 or, in urgent situations by calling 911.

Referrals may be made by one of the following methods:

The CARE Team:  
**uwtcare@uw.edu**  
**253-692-4901**  
**MAT 103**  
M-F, 8 AM - 5 PM

The Associate Vice  
Chancellor for Student Life:  
**uwtsl@uw.edu**  
**253-692-4901**  
**MAT 103**  
M-F, 8 AM - 5 PM

Campus Safety & Security:  
**uwtsafe@uw.edu**  
**253-692-4416**  
**DOU 180**  
AT ANY TIME

### What happens after a referral has been made?

All UW Tacoma student support services value student privacy and, in most circumstances, will not share additional details about a student's personal situation. They can share university actions and may consult with the individual making a referral about actions they can take. Campus Safety & Security will always communicate with affected individuals and/or the campus community if there is a risk of harm or violence.

### Questions regarding the CARE Team or referral process?

Contact the Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs  
253-692-4901 | [uwtcare@uw.edu](mailto:uwtcare@uw.edu) | [tacoma.uw.edu/care](http://tacoma.uw.edu/care)

## WHAT ABOUT PRIVACY?

*The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** permits the following:*

UW faculty and staff may disclose personally identifiable information from an educational record to appropriate individuals in connection with a health and safety emergency.

Information may be released to parents, police, or others, if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student or other individuals.

Observations of a student's conduct or statements made by a student are not FERPA protected educational records. Such information should be shared with University personnel when there is a specific need to know with appropriate consideration for student privacy.

# HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

## SEE SOMETHING?

### INDICATORS OF DISTRESS *Be aware of the following indicators of distress.*

Look for groupings, duration, and severity - not just isolated occurrences.

#### ACADEMIC

Sudden decline in quality of work/grades

Repeated absences

Disorganized performance

Multiple requests for extensions

Overly demanding of faculty and staff time/attention

Bizarre content in writings or presentations

Focus of office hours/meetings is more personal concerns than academic

#### PHYSICAL

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/bizarre

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL

Self-disclosure of personal distress such as family problems, financial difficulties, grief or contemplation of suicide

Unusual/disproportional emotional response to events

Excessive tearfulness/panic reactions

Delusions and/or paranoia

Irritability/unusual apathy

Verbal abuse (e.g., taunting, badgering, intimidation)

Expressions of concern from peers

#### SAFETY RISK

Implying or making a direct threat to harm self or others

Unprovoked anger/hostility

Physical violence (e.g., shoving, grabbing, assault, use of weapons)

Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, rage, worthlessness, isolation, suicidal ideations/violent behavior - a "cry for help"

Stalking/ harassing behaviors

Communicating threats written or verbal

**SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY**

## DO SOMETHING

### Manage the Situation:

The welfare of the campus community is the top priority when a student displays threatening or potentially violent behavior. *Seek help immediately.*

### Listen Sensitively and Carefully:

Use a non-confrontational approach and a calm voice. *"I'm worried about you."*

### 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. *"Have you been feeling bad enough to consider hurting or killing yourself?"*

### Connect to Resources:

Offer alternatives and assist the student in choosing the best resource.

### Follow Through:

Direct the student to the physical location of the identified resource. Follow up with the student and involved parties.

### Consultation and Documentation:

Document your interactions with distressed students and consult with your supervisor, administrator, chair or dean after any incident.

[tacoma.uw.edu/care](https://tacoma.uw.edu/care)