

# Supporting Students: What to Do, When You Don't Know What to Do

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE  
COUNSELING AND CONSULTATION SERVICE



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AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES





# Learning Objectives



## Participants will be able to:

- Recognize disruptive or unusual behaviors
- Gain tools and strategies for responding to such behaviors
- Give thought to their role - what, to whom and how to report and refer
- Consider what care is available on their campus and how to reach those services
- UNDERSTAND THEY ARE NOT ALONE IN DEALING WITH THESE ISSUES



# Disruptive or Inappropriate Behavior



- Behavior that interferes with other students, faculty or staff and their access to an appropriate educational or work environment
- May be severe, or ongoing and pervasive
- Possible causes:
  - ✓ Rudeness
  - ✓ Anger, anxiety or other emotional state
  - ✓ Mental health issues



# Disruptive or Inappropriate Behavior

Rudeness?

Disruption?

Violence?

- Cell phones and text messages
- Talking in class
- Yelling and screaming
- Persistent and unreasonable demands of attention
- Words and/or actions that have the effect of intimidating or causing fear for your safety
- Use of profanity or fighting words



# What Is Not Disruptive Behavior

- Cultural differences
- Individuals who require more time or need accommodations for and have appropriate documentation



# Unusual Behaviors

- Marked change in behavior
- Deterioration in personal hygiene
- Depressed or lethargic mood
- Hyperactivity or very rapid speech
- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Strange or bizarre behavior
- References to suicide
- References to homicide



# How to Deal with Disruptive People

- Remain calm
- It's not about you; detach
- Don't ignore warning signs
- Listen through the behavior
- Don't become hostile
- Set appropriate boundaries





## Tactics and Tips

- Lower your voice and speak slowly
- Watch your body language/space
- Use “I” statements
- Set clear expectations/use behavioral terms
- Use empathy/active listening
- Acknowledge a problem
- Know your limitations



## Other Tips

- Do not touch the person or invade personal space
- Do not say “I know how you feel”
- Do not minimize the person’s feelings
- Know you do not have to “solve” the problem
- Be aware of gender/cultural aspects
- Telephone – give warning before hanging up
- Responding to threats of legal action



# Dealing with Unusual Behavior

- Talk to the person (privately)
- Express your concern in behavioral terms
- Be nonjudgmental
- Be an active listener
- Help explore options
- Maintain clear boundaries
- Refer to appropriate department



# Document, Document, Document!

- Keep log of interactions
- Keep copies of e-mails, messages, letters, etc.
- Report observations
- Be factual and detailed, use concrete terms
- Keep out editorial language, suppositions
- Do not keep as part of an academic record
- Share appropriately
- FERPA/HIPAA
- Consult! Consult! Consult!



## When They Won't Take NO for an Answer

- Do not make promises you cannot keep
- When you make referrals; notify that person
- Be decisive
- Follow the rules/procedures of your University (do not make exceptions)
- Do not allow complainant to set the agenda
- Determine when to stop engaging
- Consult or report



# Personal Safety

- Have a safety plan BEFORE anything occurs; notify colleagues
- Review environment – exits, office set up, etc.
- Develop code words
- Request a stand-by
- Ask for help
- Get out!
- Know the weapons policy of your University



## Role of the Police at OSU

- Issue trespass warnings
- They have access to criminal histories and other law enforcement documentation
- They have the legal authority to make an arrest
- They have authority to assist getting the student to Emergency care (Pink Slip)
- (OSU Police: 614-292-2121) **Know the number to your campus police and keep that in a clear and easy to find place**
- Consult: What is the role of police on your campus?



# Role of Student Conduct at OSU

- Jurisdiction
- Code of Student Conduct
- Interim suspension
- Process Sanctions
- No contact orders/restrictions
- **What is the role of Student Conduct at your University?**





# Role of Counseling and Consultation Service at OSU



- Provides mental health services to all students
- Triage system for initial contact with students
- Urgent appointments available daily
- Consultation regarding how to best handle a situation
- [www.ccs.osu.edu](http://www.ccs.osu.edu)
- What is the role of your campus counseling service and how do students/faculty/staff access them for care?



## What is a CAT Team? - Students

- Informal consultation team when a student is involved in severe disruption or there is a mental health concern
- Assess situations involving students who pose a potential risk of harm
- Take a multidisciplinary approach to developing strategies for responding to students, situations or incidents
- Does your institution have a CAT team or similar crisis review team? How can they be accessed?



## Other Resources at OSU

- Emergency 9-1-1
- The Ohio State University Police 292-2121
- Student Conduct 292-0748
- Counseling and Consultation Service 292-5766
- Human Resources 292-2800
- Student Advocacy 292-1111
- Student Wellness Center 292-4527
- Employee Assistance Program 292-4472
- **What are the resources you want to keep listed and available for your students?**



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