Recognizing and Assisting the Disturbing or Disruptive Student

Guidelines for Faculty and Staff
Student Counseling & Disability Services for Students
Division of Student Success
Agenda

- Violence on college campuses
- Faculty/Staff as helpers
- Common Student Issues - Warning Signs
- Handling Disruptive Behavior
- Crisis Levels
- Referrals
Violence on Campus

- Virginia Tech 2007, 33 people were killed
- Since 1966, there have been 88 shooting deaths at various U.S. campuses, but about 1100-1400 suicide deaths occur (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2007)
- Homicidal incidents are very rare, but get far more attention than the high numbers of suicide & assault on campus. At TAMIU, self harm is a defined category of assault.
Faculty & Staff as Helping Resources

- Forming relationships with students has multiple effects
  - Students will turn to you for help
  - Students will share personal emotions, struggles, situations
  - Puts you in a place to assist the student
Common Student Issues

- Depression/ Suicide
- Substance Use
- Dealing with Anger
- Boundary Issues
Depression/ Suicide

Signs: slow speech, crying, decrease interest & motivation, low energy

What to do:
- Take the issue seriously
- Listen
- Express your concerns directly
- Make the appropriate referral
Substance Use

Signs: falling asleep in class, mood swings, inappropriate clothing, deterioration of appearance

What to do:
– Express your care and concern directly
– Be well informed about alcohol and other drugs
– Avoid being judgmental
– Make the appropriate referral
Angry & Upset Students

What to do:
- Respect personal space
- Find a quiet area to speak in private*
- Keep your voice soft and slower than normal
- Seek clarification of the problem
- Try to see the problem from the student’s perspective

(Be mindful of your sense of safety)*
Boundary Issues

Suggestions for maintaining appropriate boundaries:

– Communicate respect for students and self
– Consider your role(s) with the student
– Bear in mind how cultural backgrounds impact relationships
– Note what draws and distances you from students
– Consult with colleagues about concerns
Handling Disruptive Students

- Set boundaries during initial interactions
- Try to avoid confrontation in public arenas
- Address inappropriate behavior immediately
- If you feel unsafe or uncomfortable with the student:
  - Consider informing university police/JO
  - Do not meet with the student alone
Levels of Distress

- Recognizing the level will determine your next step
- Same situation may cause a different level of distress for different students
- Levels 1-3
Level 1

- Not disruptive to others, but indicates help is needed
- Major change in academic work, attendance, or appearance
- Change in style of interaction
  - Avoidant vs excessive
- Depressed or anxious mood
Level 2

- New or consistent behavior that is disruptive to others
- Significant emotional distress
- Repeated requests for special consideration
- Unusual or exaggerated emotional response
Level 3

- Highly disruptive behavior, i.e. hostile, aggressive, violent
- Inability to communicate clearly
- Overtly suicidal thoughts
- Homicidal threats
Referrals

Student Counseling Services (SCS)

(956) 326-2230

- Can call to consult on a situation
- No cost to students
- Walk in services available daily
- Confidential services
Emergencies

Call Campus Police
(956) 326-2911

Campus Police will contact SCS/DSS as needed.
Other Emergency Contacts Needed

Suicide - Lifeline
(956) 722-5433

Border Region Mental Health and Mental Retardation
(800)643-1102

Rape Abuse Help Line
(800)551-0008