

Assisting Students in Distress

As faculty members, you may be the first to notice a student who is experiencing difficulty. Often, there are indicators that a student is experiencing distress long before a situation escalates to a crisis. To assist our students in maintaining their mental health and maximizing their intellectual growth, it is important to identify difficulties as early as possible. The presence of one of the following indicators alone does not necessarily mean that the student is experiencing severe distress. However, the more indicators you notice, the more likely it is that the student needs help.



MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Academic Indicators	Physical Indicators	Psychological Indicators	Safety Risk Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden decline in quality of work and grades • Repeated absences • Disorganized performance • Multiple requests for extensions • Overly demanding of faculty and staff time and attention • Bizarre content in writings or presentations • You find yourself doing more personal rather than academic counseling during office hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marked changes in physical appearance including deterioration in grooming • Excessive fatigue/sleep disturbance • Intoxication, hangovers, or smelling of alcohol • Disoriented or “out of it” • Tangential, disconnected, or slurred speech • Behavior is out of context or bizarre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-disclosure of personal distress such as family problem, financial difficulties, contemplating suicide, grief • Unusual/disproportional emotional responses to events • Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions • Irritability or unusual apathy • Expressions of concerns about the student by his/her peers • Delusions and paranoia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unprovoked anger or hostility • Physical violence (shoving, grabbing, assault) • Implying or making a direct threat to harm self or others • Stalking or harassing • Communicating threats via email, correspondence, text, or phone calls

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Faculty members may be unsure if sharing student information is a violation of FERPA. The obligation to protect students’ privacy is waived in emergency situations. Additionally, observations of a student’s conduct or statements made by a student are not part of student’s educational record and do not fall under FERPA. Relevant information can be shared with appropriate school officials even when it is not an emergency but there is concern about a student’s well-being.

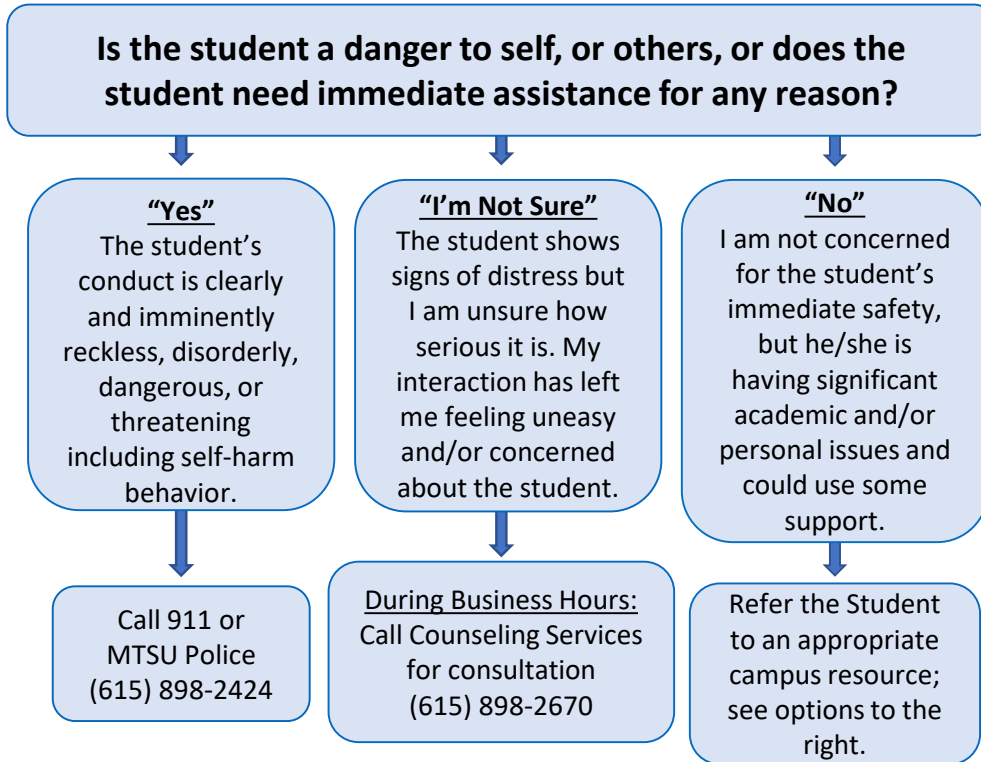


The **Student Assistance Coordinating Committee (SACC)** is a resource and point of contact for all campus members who are concerned about a student’s safety or well being. The committee’s purpose is to provide support, information, and referrals to those working with students of concern, and to coordinate responses among participating campus departments. If you would like to report a student of concern to the committee, contact Dr. Mary Kaye Anderson, Counseling Services, at 615 898-2670.

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Response Protocol

Follow the chart to determine whom to contact when faced with a distressed or distressing student.



Campus Resources	
University Police	615-898-2424
Counseling Services	615-898-2670
Center for Counseling & Psychological Services*	615-898-2271
Health Services	615-898-2988
Title IX Office	615-898-2185
Disability & Access Center	615-898-2783
Housing & Residential Life	615-898-2971
Career Development	615-898-2500
June Anderson Center	615-898-5812
MT One Stop	615-898-2111
Office of Student Conduct	615-898-2750
TRiO	615-898-5443
Veteran Center	615-904-8347

Community Resources	
National Suicide Prevention Line	1-800-273-8255
TN Crisis Line	1-855-274-7471
Crisis Text Line	Text TN to 741-741
Domestic Violence Hotline	615-896-2012
Sexual Assault Hotline	615-494-9262
Trevor Lifeline (LGBTQ+)	1-866-488-7386

*CCPS is a training site affiliated with MTSU’s Professional Counseling Program. Supervised graduate students provide counseling services free of charge to MTSU students and staff. If a student falls under the “I’m Not Sure” category, reach out to MTSU Counseling Services for consultation.

Remember to also take care of *You*

Helping a distressed student can be mentally and emotionally draining. MTSU’s confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers free counseling to university employees (up to 5 sessions annually). Call 1-855-437-3486 to utilize this benefit.

