

# Recognizing and Helping Students in Crisis

## Where do I start?

If you are concerned about a student, don't let uncertainty stop you from taking action. UMass Amherst is committed to supporting students in crisis. The U Matter team has developed this guide to help you **Recognize, Respond to, Refer and Report** troubling student behavior. For additional information, talk to your supervisor or department chair and **contact the Dean of Students Office at (413) 545-2684.**

## Responding to Students in Crisis

### Stay safe

When a student displays threatening or potentially violent behavior, your and the student's safety and the welfare of the campus community are the top priorities. Coordinated professional help and follow-up care are effective ways to prevent suicide and violence.

### Trust your instincts

If you are concerned about a student, consult your department chair, supervisor and the Dean of Students Office. Promptly report safety concerns and Student Conduct Code violations.

### De-escalate and support

Distressed students can be sensitive. Avoid threatening, potentially embarrassing or intimidating statements. Help students connect with the resources they need.

### Clarify expectations

Set early limits on disruptive or self-destructive behavior. Remind students verbally or in writing (e.g., in the syllabus) of standards/expectations for conduct, and of possible consequences for disorderly behavior. Refer to the Code of Student Conduct.

### Listen sensitively and carefully

Vulnerable students need to be heard and helped. They may find it difficult to articulate their distress. Ask directly if they feel their functioning is impaired or if they have thoughts of harming themselves or others.



**Actively caring for each other and our community**

### Share what you know

**State and federal laws and University policies mandate reporting in many crisis situations.** The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) allows faculty and staff to report student health and safety concerns to relevant campus offices trained to handle situations with sensitivity and care. Taking appropriate action does not violate a student's privacy.

### Consult to coordinate a timely response

Consult with appropriate University personnel to coordinate care for the student. Always report serious or persistent behavior to the Dean of Students Office as soon as possible. Misconduct may be formally addressed through the Student Conduct process and additional campus resources may be necessary to help reduce or eliminate disruptive behaviors.

### Follow up

Once you have referred a student in crisis, it is helpful (but not obligatory) for you to follow up in their ongoing care. Your firsthand knowledge and personal connection to this student is valuable in understanding and appropriately responding to their situation.

### Take care

Helping a troubled student can take a toll on your personal well-being. Make sure to acknowledge what you've been through and receive adequate support.

## Resources for faculty, staff, undergrad and graduate students

### EMERGENCY

- UMass Amherst Police: (413) 545-2121 • Emergency: 911**
- immediate emergency services for threatening or dangerous behavior
  - active shooter and campus safety trainings
  - campus-wide alarm system for crisis notification and response

### University Health Services: (413) 577-5000

- medical care and 24/7 on-call services
- designated Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program site
- health insurance questions and explanation of benefits

### Center for Counseling and Psychological Health: (413) 545-2337 • After-hours emergencies: (413) 577-5000

- brief psychotherapies, crisis intervention and 24/7 emergency services
- situation assessment consultation

### Center for Women and Community: (413) 545-0883

#### Rape Crisis: (413) 545-0800

- 24/7 rape crisis hotline for people of all genders
- free counseling and support groups for survivors, friends and families
- community training on issues of consent, sexual assault and harassment

### FOLLOW-UP, SUPPORT & TRAINING

#### Dean of Students Office: (413) 545-2684

- managing challenging classroom situations
- supporting a student in crisis or trauma

#### Ombuds Office: (413) 545-0867

- third-party facilitation and informal mediation services
- resolving grade disputes between students and faculty/staff

#### Faculty and Staff Assistance Program: (413) 545-0350

- strategies for dealing with problematic students
- resources for managing stress and other reactions to challenging situations

#### Center for Health Promotion: (413) 577-5181

- confidential alcohol screening and brief intervention through the BASICS program
- classroom presentations on health topics; faculty and graduate staff training on identifying and assisting high-risk students

#### Psychological Services Center: (413) 545-0041

- Free initial consultation and sliding-scale psychotherapy services for adults, children and families

#### Disability Services: (413) 545-0892

- Registering and accommodating students with all types of disabilities
- faculty and staff consultation on issues related to students with disabilities

## RECOGNIZE

## RESPOND

## REFER

## REPORT

### “Not sure what, but something’s wrong”

Disturbing content in paper/e-mails  
Decline in academic performance  
Excessive absenteeism  
Irrational or bizarre behavior  
Sudden change in demeanor (e.g. an extroverted student withdrawn, an organized student forgetful, etc.)

Express concern and care  
Give an example of a time that the student’s behavior has worried you  
Listen to and believe student’s responses  
Be supportive and encouraging if student agrees to get help

**Urgent:** 911  
**Advice and consultation:**  
[Center for Counseling and Psychological Health \(CCPH\)](#) (413) 545-2337  
[UMass Amherst Police Department](#) (413) 545-2121

[Dean of Students Office](#) (413) 545-2684  
[Academic Dean](#)  
[Undergraduate Advisor](#)

### Depression, self harm, suicidal risk

Significant changes in appearance, behavior or personal hygiene  
Decline in academic performance  
Written or verbal statements preoccupied with theme of death or that convey intent to harm self or others  
Fresh cuts, scratches or other wounds  
Withdrawal from activities and friends  
Statements of hopelessness such as, “I hate this life” or “Everyone is better off without me”

Express concern and care  
Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming  
Always take suicidal statements, thoughts or behaviors very seriously  
If you suspect a student may be suicidal, seek immediate consultation  
If possible, ask directly about their feelings and plans  
Call 911 if there is a threat to student’s safety or the safety of others

**Urgent:** 911  
**Advice and consultation:**  
[Center for Counseling and Psychological Health \(CCPH\)](#) (413) 545-2337  
[UMass Amherst Police Department](#) (413) 545-2121

[Dean of Students Office](#) (413) 545-2684

### Misconduct, inappropriate behavior and classroom disruption

**Disruptive Conduct:** Inappropriate outbursts or persistent interruptions, continued arguing beyond the scope of academic debate, use of threats  
**Disorderly Conduct:\*** Throwing items, refusing to leave, preventing others from leaving, showing or stating the presence of a weapon  
**\*Disorderly conduct and threatening behaviors require immediate action**

Express concern and care  
Explain the impact of student’s behavior on the group or class  
Outline your expectations and help student explore options and alternatives

**Urgent:** 911  
**Advice and consultation:**  
[Center for Counseling and Psychological Health \(CCPH\)](#) (413) 545-2337  
[UMass Amherst Police Department](#) (413) 545-2121

[Dean of Students Office](#) (413) 545-2684  
[Academic Dean](#)

### Crime victimization, hazing

Appears fearful, anxious, nervous or angry  
Withdrawal from activities and friends  
Visible injuries or bruises  
Cuts, brands, or scars with a distinct pattern (e.g. Greek alphabet letter)  
Unusual absence of or damage to personal items such as laptop, cellphone, etc.

Express concern and care  
Remain calm. Showing outrage may cause a student to shut down  
Do not interpret student’s emotions as evidence of a crime  
Listen to and believe student’s responses  
Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming

**Urgent:** 911  
**Advice and consultation:**  
[UMass Amherst Police Department](#) (413) 545-2121  
[Center for Counseling and Psychological Health \(CCPH\)](#) (413) 545-2337  
[Dean of Students Office](#) (413) 545-2684

[Dean of Students Office](#) (413) 545-2684  
[Academic Dean](#)

*Say things like, “I’m sorry that happened, but I’m glad you’re safe now.” and, “Thank you for trusting me enough to tell me.”*

### Actual or suspected medical issues *(chronic illness, eating disorders, etc.)*

Frequent or extended absences  
Fatigue or dizziness  
Noticeable weight loss or gain  
Hair loss; pale or gray skin tone  
Unusual or secretive eating habits; obsession with the fat/caloric content of food  
Use of self-disparaging terms (fat, gross, ugly, etc.)

Express concern and care  
Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming  
Listen to and believe student’s responses  
Recommend (or, if necessary, insist upon) medical intervention

**Urgent:** 911  
**Advice and consultation:**  
[University Health Services](#) (413) 577-5000  
[Center for Counseling and Psychological Health \(CCPH\)](#) (413) 545-2337  
[Dean of Students Office](#) (413) 545-2684

[Dean of Students Office](#) (413) 545-2684  
[Academic Dean](#)

**RECOGNIZE****RESPOND****REFER****REPORT****Bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, cyberstalking**

Internet flaming, trolling, name-calling or harassment  
 Communications that continue after being told to stop  
 Threatening to release private information/photos  
 Verbal abuse, innuendo of a sexual nature, unwanted sexual flirtations  
 Demand for sexual favors by peer or supervisor accompanied by implied or overt threat concerning an individual's academic status or employment  
 Display of sexually suggestive pictures or cartoons in workspace, residence halls or online  
 Continued jokes, language, epithets, gestures or remarks of a sexual nature

Express concern and care  
 Listen to and believe student's responses  
 Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming  
 Encourage targeted student to save all digital communications as downloaded files and/or hard copies

**Urgent:** 911  
**Advice and consultation:**  
**UMass Amherst Police Department** (413) 545-2121

**Dean of Students Office**  
 (413) 545-2684  
**Title IX Coordination Team**  
 (EO&D) (413) 545-3464

**Violence/harassment Interpersonal/sexual assault**

Appears fearful or unusually anxious about pleasing partner or others  
 Apologizes/excuses partner/other's behavior  
 Mentions partner/other's possessiveness, jealousy or violent behavior, but may laugh it off  
 Visible injuries or bruises  
 Frequent mishaps or injuries with illogical or no explanations  
 Crying or leaving when sexual violence, domestic violence, stalking or child abuse is the topic

Express concern and care  
 Listen to and believe student's responses  
 Remain calm. Showing outrage may shut student down  
 Do not interpret student's emotions as evidence of assault or violence  
 Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming  
 Recommend (or, if necessary, insist upon) medical intervention

*Say things like, "You've been through something very frightening. I'm so sorry."*

**Urgent:** 911  
 CWC Rape Crisis Hotline  
 (413) 545-0800  
**Advice and consultation:**  
**Center for Women and Community (CWC)**  
 (413) 545-0883  
**Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (CCPH)**  
 (413) 545-2337  
**University Health Services**  
 (413) 577-5000

**Dean of Students Office**  
 (413) 545-2684  
**Title IX Coordination Team**  
 (EO&D) (413) 545-3464

**Alcohol or other drug abuse**

Intoxicated/high in class or at meetings/events  
 Excessive sleepiness or hyper energy  
 Decline in academic performance  
 References to alcohol or drug use in conversations, papers, projects, etc.  
 Deterioration in physical appearance (bloodshot eyes, dilated pupils, trembling hands, etc.)  
 Unusual smells on breath, body or clothes  
 University conduct reports and public arrest records

Express concern or care  
 Give an example of a time that the student's behavior has worried you  
 Listen to and believe student's responses  
 Be supportive and encouraging if the student agrees to get help  
 Offer to help the student make an appointment with BASICS program for alcohol screening and intervention

**Urgent:** 911  
**Advice and consultation:**  
**BASICS** (413) 577-5071  
**Center for Health Promotion (CHP)** (413) 577-5181  
**Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (CCPH)**  
 (413) 545-2337  
**University Health Services**  
 (413) 577-5000

**Dean of Students Office**  
 (413) 545-2684

**Family or personal tragedy, loss, or crisis**

*(illness or death of family member, job loss, foreclosure, natural disaster, divorce or break-up, legal difficulties, etc.)*

Frequent or extended absences  
 Decline in academic performance  
 Mentions relationship, financial or other challenges  
 Difficulty concentrating and making decisions  
 Exhaustion/fatigue  
 Excessive worry, sleeping/eating problems

Express concern and care  
 Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming  
 Listen to and believe student's responses  
 Be supportive and encouraging if the student agrees to get help

**Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (CCPH)**  
 (413) 545-2337  
**Dean of Students Office**  
 (413) 545-2684; Emergency Loan Program (413) 545-2684  
**Student Legal Services Office**  
 (413) 545-1995  
**International Programs Office** (413) 545-2710/2843

**Dean of Students Office**  
 (413) 545-2684  
**Academic Dean**

# Maintaining Compliance with State and Federal Laws and University Policies

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## Academic Honesty Policy

University of Massachusetts Amherst's Academic Honesty Policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate students, instructors and other instructional staff participating in academic classes, programs and research projects offered by the University, including online and distance learning, and is administered by the Ombuds Office: [www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty).

**For more information, training and support, contact the Ombuds Office at (413) 545-0867**

## Code of Student Conduct

All University of Massachusetts Amherst students are responsible for complying with the rules, regulations, policies, and procedures contained in the Code of Student Conduct, as well as those in other official University communications.

The Code of Student Conduct, Residential Life regulations and other administrative policies impacting students are available at [www.umass.edu/studentlife/community/policies-and-guidelines](http://www.umass.edu/studentlife/community/policies-and-guidelines).

**For more information, training and support, contact the Dean of Students Office at (413) 545-2684**

## Nondiscrimination Policy

The University of Massachusetts Amherst prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, age, marital status, national origin, mental or physical disability, political belief or affiliation, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information and any other class of individuals protected from discrimination under state or federal law in any aspect of the access to, admission, or treatment of students in its programs and activities, or in employment and application for employment. Furthermore, University policy prevents retaliation for filing complaints of discrimination. View the full policy at [www.umass.edu/eod/aapolicy.html](http://www.umass.edu/eod/aapolicy.html).

**For more information, training and support, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (EO&D) at (413) 545-3464**

## University Alcohol and Drug Policies

Students are responsible for obtaining and adhering to the University's alcohol and other drug policies, which conform to state and federal laws and enhance the health, safety and educational interests of our community. University Alcohol and Drug Policies are available at [www.umass.edu/studentlife/community/policies-and-guidelines](http://www.umass.edu/studentlife/community/policies-and-guidelines).

**For more information, training and support, contact the Dean of Students Office at (413) 545-2684**

## Guidelines for Classroom Civility and Respect Policy

University of Massachusetts Amherst faculty members are responsible for maintaining classrooms that promote the safe and open exchange of ideas. Students are responsible for personal behavior that supports these goals. Disruption of the learning process may lead to disenrollment or disciplinary action. The full policy may be viewed at [www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct/classroomcivility](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/classroomcivility).

**For more information, training and support, contact the Dean of Students Office at (413) 545-2684**

## Title IX

Subject to exceptions that can apply to law enforcement personnel, counselors, clinicians or clergy, any employee or contractor who becomes aware of a potential incident of sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence or other assault or harassment involving a student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst – either as victim or perpetrator – on or off campus must promptly report the matter either to the Dean of Students Office or a supervisor, who must promptly notify the Dean of Students Office. The person making the report to the Dean of Students Office should not attempt to investigate the matter. The Dean of Students Office will undertake all such investigations, as appropriate under the circumstances and take every precaution to ensure privacy. For details see [www.umass.edu/diversity/title\\_ix.php](http://www.umass.edu/diversity/title_ix.php).

**For more information, training and support, contact the Title IX Coordination Team at (413) 545-3464 or the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (EO&D) at (413) 545-3464**

## Clery Act

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act is the federal law originally known as the Campus Security Act that requires universities to disclose information about crime on and around their campuses. The law is tied to federal financial aid program funding and is enforced by the United States Department of Education. A copy of UMass Amherst's annual security report is available at [www.umass.edu/umpd/alerts/crimestats](http://www.umass.edu/umpd/alerts/crimestats). It includes campus security policies, crime statistics for the previous three years, daily crime logs and timely missing student warnings.

**For more information, training and support, contact the UMass Amherst Police Department at (413) 545-2121**

## Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that allows present and former students access to their educational records and provides basic privacy protection. Educational records are defined as those directly related to a student and maintained by an educational agency or institution.

FERPA permits disclosure of personal identifiable information from a student's educational record to parents, police or others to protect the health and safety of the student or other individuals. Information can be shared with University personnel when there is a specific need to know.

Observations of a student's conduct or statements made by a student are not part of a student's educational record and should be appropriately shared.

OIT provides FERPA certification for faculty and staff at [www.oit.umass.edu/support/spire/about-ferpa-certification](http://www.oit.umass.edu/support/spire/about-ferpa-certification).

**For more information, training and support, contact the Dean of Students Office at (413) 545-2684 or the University Registrar at (413) 545-0555**