

Guide to Assist Disruptive or Distressed Individuals

Ohio State’s Counseling and Consultation Service and Employee Assistance Program developed this information guide to help you assist anyone in the university community experiencing distress or causing a disruption.

If you are concerned for your safety or that of others, CALL 911 immediately.

- If you are concerned about the individual’s self-harm, call Suicide Prevention Services 614-221-5445
- When the situation allows...
- If the individual is a student, call Student Conduct.. 614-292-0748
- If the individual is a faculty or staff member,
call the Office of Human Resources 614-292-2800

If you are NOT concerned for your immediate safety or that of others:

- Discuss the situation with the person to address the inappropriate behavior.
- Consider asking any disruptive individual to leave the room.*
- Suggest the following:
 - STUDENTS** can contact Student Life’s Counseling and Consultation Service 614-292-5766
 - Counseling is confidential.
 - Counseling does not affect academic records.
 - Counseling sessions are free to registered Ohio State students.
 - FACULTY OR STAFF** can contact the Employee Assistance Program 1-800-678-6265
 - Counseling is available to university employees, their immediate families and domestic partners.
 - Counseling is not a part of personnel or human resource files.
 - Five free counseling sessions are available; counseling is confidential and voluntary.

**Consult pages 2 and 3 of this document for helpful hints on understanding and addressing distressed or disruptive behavior.*

Ohio State Suicide Prevention’s REACH Training Program

suicideprevention.osu.edu

Nationally, suicide is the second leading cause of death in young adults aged 19-24. Suicide is preventable, however, and you can help prevent a suicide by learning warning signs and how to intervene.

Ohio State Suicide Prevention is a free resource. Its REACH training program is a short, easy and free program available to all Ohio State affiliated organizations, units, departments and individuals upon request. For further information and/or to schedule training, call 614-688-5829 or email osusuiicideprevention@osu.edu.

**24-Hour Crisis/
Suicide Prevention Services**

Suicide Prevention Services
614-221-5445

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
800-273-8255

(Veterans, press 1 to talk with a veteran)

Call for yourself or for someone else.
Services are free and confidential. Available
24 hours a day, 365 days a year.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

ASSISTING **Disruptive Individuals**

WHAT IS DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR?

Behavior that interferes with students, faculty or staff and their access to an appropriate educational or work environment is considered disruptive.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR?

- Yelling or screaming
- Persistent and unreasonable demands for time and attention
- Words or actions that intimidate or harass another
- Words or actions that cause another to fear for his/her personal safety
- Threats of physical assault

WHAT IS MY ROLE?

Disruptive behavior should not be ignored. Remain calm. Remind yourself that it is not about you; it is about the situation. Tell the individual that such behavior is inappropriate and there are consequences for failing to improve the disruptive behavior. Many disruptive situations involve anger. Recognize that the period of peak anger usually lasts 20-30 seconds. Although this may seem like an eternity in the throes of the situation, often it is best to “wait it out” before progressing.

DOCUMENTATION

Disruptive behavior should be documented. Write a factual, detailed account of what occurred. Use concrete terms. Share the documentation appropriately.

THE DOs

- DO listen through the anger. Use active listening.
- DO acknowledge the feelings of the individual.
- DO allow the person to vent and tell you what is upsetting to him/her. Use silence to allow the person to talk it out.
- DO set limits. Explain clearly and directly what behaviors are acceptable: “I will be willing to speak with you as soon as you lower your voice.”
- DO be firm, steady, consistent and honest.
- DO focus on what you can do to help resolve the situation safely.
- DO make personal referrals. Give a name of an individual when possible, and call ahead to brief the person.
- DO maintain clear and consistent boundaries and expectations.
- DO report the behavior to University Police and/or Student Conduct or Human Resources.

THE DON'Ts

- DON'T interrupt, particularly during the first 20-30 seconds of peak anger.
- DON'T minimize the situation.
- DON'T get into an argument or shouting match.
- DON'T blame, ridicule or use sarcasm.
- DON'T touch.
- DON'T ignore warning signs that the person is about to explode.
- DON'T ignore your own limitations on established boundaries.

If you feel threatened or endangered, call 911!

(Adapted from materials from The University of Colorado at Boulder and Penn State University)

Referrals & Resources

(614 area code except where noted):

Emergency 911
University Police 292-2121
Student Conduct 292-0748
Employee Assistance Program 1-800-678-6265

ASSISTING **Distressed Individuals**

WHAT IS MY ROLE?

You might be in a good position to spot someone who may be emotionally distressed. While some of this is expected, especially during stressful times of the year, you may notice someone acting in a way that is inconsistent with your normal experience with that person. You may be able to be a resource in time of trouble, and your expression of interest and concern may be critical in helping the individual re-establish emotional equilibrium. You also may be able to alert the university so that an appropriate intervention can be made.

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- Marked change in performance or behavior
- Excessive absence or tardiness
- Trouble eating and/or sleeping
- Disruptive behavior
- Undue aggressiveness
- Exaggerated emotional response that is obviously inappropriate to the situation
- Depressed or lethargic mood
- Hyperactivity or very rapid speech
- Marked change in personal hygiene
- Excessive confusion
- Dramatic weight loss or gain
- Dependency (individual hangs around or makes excessive appointments to see you)
- Behavior indicating loss of contact with reality
- Feelings of helplessness or hopelessness
- References to suicide
- References to homicide or assault
- Isolation from friends, family or classmates
- Giving away prized possessions
- Preparing for death by making a will and final arrangements

THE **DOs**

- DO be mindful of cultural norms.
- DO speak with the individual privately.
- DO express your concern in behavioral, non-judgmental terms.
- DO tell him/her you are willing to help.
- DO listen carefully to what he/she is troubled about.
- DO help him/her explore options.
- DO suggest resources.
- DO make referrals to the appropriate campus department.
- DO point out that help is available and that seeking such help is a sign of strength and courage, rather than of weakness or failure.
- DO maintain clear and consistent boundaries and expectations.
- DO recognize your limits.
- DO enlist the help of others as appropriate.
- DO document the interaction or incident.

THE **DON'Ts**

- DON'T promise confidentiality.
- DON'T judge or criticize.
- DON'T ignore the unusual behavior.
- DON'T make the problem your own.
- DON'T involve yourself beyond the limits of your time or skill.

[If you feel threatened or endangered, call 911!]

(Adapted from materials from The University of Colorado at Boulder and Penn State University)

Referrals & Resources

(614 area code except where noted):

- In a crisis situation, call University Police at 911.
- To consult regarding a student, call Counseling and Consultation Service at 614-292-5766. Refer to ccs.osu.edu.
- Student Conduct: studentconduct.osu.edu
- To consult regarding a faculty or staff member, call:
 - Ohio State Employee Assistance Program: 800-678-6265 (or visit osuhealthplan.com/OhioStateEAP)
 - Office of Human Resources, Employee and Labor Relations: hr.osu.edu/elr
- Ohio State Department of Public Safety: ps.ohio-state.edu

When in doubt, call 911!

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Emergency 911 University Police 292-2121

HELPFUL RESOURCES

(614 area code except where noted)

Student Life Departments

Counseling and Consultation Service (students)	292-5766
ccs.osu.edu	
Disability Services	292-3307
ods.osu.edu	
Multicultural Center	688-8449
mcc.osu.edu	
Student Advocacy Center	292-1111
studentaffairs.osu.edu/advocacy	
Student Conduct	292-0748
studentconduct.osu.edu	
Student Health Center	292-4321
shc.osu.edu	
Student Life, Office of the Vice President	292-9334
studentlife.osu.edu	
Student Wellness Center	292-4527
swc.osu.edu	
University Housing	292-8266
urds.osu.edu	

Faculty/Staff Resources

Employee Assistance Program	800-678-6265
osuhealthplan.com/OhioStateEAP	

Additional Resources

BART (to report bias or discrimination)	688-8449
studentaffairs.osu.edu/bias	
BRAVO (for cases of violence against GLBTQI)	294-7867
bravo-ohio.org	
Campus Suicide Prevention Program	688-5829
suicideprevention.osu.edu	
Military and Veterans Services	247-VETS (8387)
veterans.osu.edu	
Psychological Services Center	292-2059
labs.psy.ohio-state.edu/psc	
(at OSU Harding Hospital)	293-9600
Medicalcenter.osu.edu/patientcare/healthcare_services/mental_health/harding/Pages/index.aspx	
Sexual Assault Response Network of Central Ohio	566-4770
ohiohealth.com/sexualassaultresponsenetwork	
SVES (Sexual Violence Education and Support)	292-4527
swc.osu.edu/about-us/staff/sexual-violence-education-and-support	

