

Responding to Agitation or Escalation

- Distressed students are in need of connection and support even when agitated
- Avoid threatening, humiliating, or intimidating responses or language
- Remain calm, take deep breaths
- Keep physical distance
- Speak in a level tone and volume
- Be mindful of what might further exacerbate the person's anger
- Always keep **safety** in mind -call UHCL Police Department at 281-283-2222 if needed.

Levels of Referral

Regular Referral: In the case of mild or moderately distressed students, it is probably appropriate to tell them about the CMHC and encourage them to seek services on their own. In this case, when they contact the CMHC, they can expect to set up an initial visit within a few days, a 30-minute initial consultation appointment, where they will meet with a therapist to determine a course of action, which mostly likely will include continuing therapy on campus or receiving a referral for other appropriate resources.

Crisis Referral: A crisis referral may be warranted if there is an urgent concern or a student is experiencing a high level of distress. If you determine that the student needs to be seen immediately, call and inform CMHC of the urgent situation and walk the student to our office. In some situations, it may be more desirable to ask the therapist to come to your location on campus to meet with you and the student to provide a consultation.

If the student demonstrates behavior that is cause for immediate concern contact: UHCL Police Department at 281-283-2222.

Tips about Referring to CMHC

When referring students to the Counseling and Mental Health Center it is useful to:

- Reassure students that it is an act of strength to ask for help
- Explain that there are therapists committed to helping them be successful
- Dispute the myth that only “weak” or “crazy” people go for counseling
- Remind them that counseling services are free and confidential
- Offer to help them make the initial contact with the CMHC, but keep in mind that CMHC **cannot initiate contact with a student; they must seek help on their own**

C.A.R.E. Team

If you are concerned about a student exhibiting threatening, and/or disruptive behaviors, you should make a report to the Crisis Awareness Response Emergency (CARE) Team. The purpose of the CARE Team is to and provide a collaborative multidisciplinary approach to assess and respond to students of concern and/or student conduct.

CARE TEAM: <https://www.uhcl.edu/dean-of-students/>

Services Offered

Individual Therapy
Group Therapy
Couples Therapy
Psychiatry

The Mind Spa
Biofeedback
WellTrack Boost
Togetherall Peer Support

Counseling and Mental Health Center Office Hours

Monday 9am-5pm Tuesday- Friday 8am-5pm
If you have an urgent psychological concern and you need to speak with a mental health counselor immediately dial 281-283-2580 and press 2

Responding to Distressed Students

Signs of Distress

Problems in Academic Performance

- Changes in grades or academic performance
- Changes in class attendance or turning in assignments
- Unusual or disturbing content in writing

Social Indicators

- Marked change in patterns of interaction (e.g. avoidance of participation, excessive anxiety when called on, domination of discussions)
- Social withdrawal

Emotional Indicators

- Depressed or lethargic mood
- Increased anxiety
- Extreme mood swings
- Unusual or exaggerated emotional responses to events

Unusual Behavior

- Agitation or Acting-out behavior that pushes the limits of decorum and interferes with the educational environment
- Drug or alcohol abuse; visibly intoxicated or high
- Hyperactivity and/or rapid speech
- Marked change in personal habits
- Repeatedly falling asleep in class

Signs of Mental Health Crisis

- Destruction of property or other criminal acts
- Extreme anxiety resulting in panic reactions
- Inability to communicate clearly orally or in writing (garbled, slurred speech; unconnected, disjointed, or rambling thoughts)
- Suicidal comments (orally or in writing)
- Loss of contact with reality
- Highly disruptive behavior
- Threats to harm others
- Stalking behavior

Tips for Responding to Distressed Students

- **Talk** to the student in private and be straightforward about your concerns for his/her welfare
- **Share your concern** with the student. Cite your observations about the student's own concerns or behaviors. Let the student know that you believe a consultation with a therapist could be helpful. Offer the student your phone to call for an appointment or walk them to the Counseling and Mental Health Center.
- **Ask** direct questions, take a calm and matter-of-fact approach. If you are worried about suicide, directly ask them if they have thoughts of suicide. There is no need to be afraid of these questions – you will not be “putting ideas into their heads” by asking. Most distressed students are relieved to know that someone has noticed and is paying attention.
- **Listen** to their thoughts and feelings in a respectful, caring, and nonjudgmental way.
- **Instill hopefulness** and a positive attitude in resolving the problem. Assure the student of the availability of resources and of people who want to help.
- Maintain clear and **consistent boundaries** and expectations.
- **Follow up** privately with the student to ask if he/she made a successful contact with the CMHC. Because of confidentiality, the CMHC will not be able to confirm or deny that the student made contact with us, so it is important that you follow up with them directly.
- **Do not promise confidentiality** to the student. There will be times when you need to consult with others, and you do not want to feel that you are breaking a promise.
- **Know your limits.** You will be able to assist many distressed students by simply listening and referring them to the CMHC. Some students, however, will need much more than you can provide. If you notice that you have overextended yourself, provide a referral either to the Counseling and Mental Health Center or to the C.A.R.E. team, depending on the nature of the student's distress.
- **Need a consult?** CMHC staff are available to consult with you about a distressed student and provide guidance on what you might want to do next. Consultations about a student cannot be guaranteed to remain confidential.
- During and after the incident, practice self-care and consult / debrief as needed.