Assisting Students in Distress

**Awareness**
Personal and academic challenges may lead to distress. You are in a unique position to help identify students who may be in need of help.

**Communication**
Sharing your concern directly with the student or reaching out to campus partners can be an important first step in helping a student access help and services. Our campus partners can help ensure the safety of the student and our campus and provide a coordinated response.

**Engagement**
Students may not know that help is available, or where to find it. Reach out to a student who you believe to be in distress, using the guidelines provided on the interior of this document.

**Privacy Laws and Confidentiality**
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits communication about a student of concern with a health and safety emergency. Observations of a student’s conduct or statements made by a student are not FERPA protected. Such information should be shared with appropriate consideration for student privacy.

Rio’s Behavioral Intervention Team (B.I.T.)

**Purpose**
B.I.T. responds to non-immediate concerns and takes a proactive approach to discuss potential issues, early intervention, and provide support and behavioral response to students displaying varying levels of disruptive, disturbed, and/or distressed behaviors.

**Process**
- Receive info about students of concern.
- Maintain/handle confidentially.
- Provide consultation and support.
- Intervene and connect students with resources; address concerns.
- Coordinate follow-up; effective deployment of resources.

**B.I.T. members:**
- Chair, Alicia Kruizenga, Student Affairs
- Dr. Connie Gutiérrez, Director, DSP&S
- Shaina Phillips, Director, Student Live & Leadership
- Dr. Mark Yokoyama, Dean of Public Safety

**What to Report to B.I.T.**
Any behavior that disrupts the mission or learning environment of the College or causes concern for the campus community’s well-being.

**How to Report to B.I.T.**
- Inform your Dean or immediate supervisor, or
- Contact the Chair via email at:
akruizenga@riohondo.edu

April, 4, 2016, April 23, 2023

If You Feel Unsafe
CALL 911
Or Campus Security
3490

Does the Student Need Immediate Assistance?

**YES**
Student’s behavior is reckless, disorderly, dangerous or threatening and is suggestive of immediate harm to self or others.

**CALL**
Life threatening call 911 then Campus Security 3490

**NOT SURE**
Student appears distressed, dazed or confused but severity is unclear. The interaction has left you feeling uneasy or concerned about the student.

**Call for consultation:**
Psychological Services (3438).

**NOT**
I am not concerned for the student’s immediate safety but s/he is having significant academic and/ or personal issues.

**NO**
Refer student to appropriate campus resource(s) such as: Counseling, DSPS, Psychological Services, Dean of Student Affairs, or Veterans Services

Tips on Addressing Students with Behavioral Issues

**Verbally Aggressive Student**

**DO NOT**
- Get into an argument or shouting match with the student.
- Become hostile or punitive, e.g., “You can’t talk to me that way?”
- Threaten or corner the student.
- Don’t ignore the situation.

**DO**
- Prevent frustration and helplessness by calmly acknowledging the situation, offer assistance.
- In a calm manner, be directive and firm.
- If student is not responding, contact Campus Security. Development a code for help with colleagues in your work area.

**Guiding/Talking Points**
- “Please stand back, you’re too close.”
- “I can not listen to you when you are yelling.”
- “I can see that you’re upset and would like to help you.”
- Respond to issues raised with realistic options.

**Depressed/Suicidal Student**

**DO NOT**
- Be afraid to ask whether the student is suicidal if you think s/he may be.
- Challenge or agree with any mistaken or illogical beliefs.
- Minimize the student’s feelings, e.g. “Don’t worry, everything will be better tomorrow.” OR let the student minimize their feelings, e.g. “I’m fine; I’m okay.”
- Bombard the student with “fix it” solutions or advice.
- Use words that embarrass or shame.

**DO**
- In an emergency, call 911, Campus Security (3490) or Psych Services (3438).
- Listen, let the student know you would like to help.
- If the student mentions feeling suicidal, take the student seriously—80% of suicides give warning of their intent.
- If the student does not say it, directly ask if the student wants to hurt him/herself, if s/he has a plan and means to execute it.
- If there’s a detailed plan, you MUST call 911.

**Guiding/Talking Points**
- “You seem to be having a hard time lately, and I would like to find a way to support you.”
- “Maybe it seems like things are so bad that you can’t find a way out. Have you thought about hurting yourself?” “If you have, how would you do it?”
- “I am concerned about you, I want to get you some help.” “I am going to call Psych Services now.”