

HOW TO HELP A STUDENT OF CONCERN: A GUIDE FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

Division of Student Affairs
Salve Regina University



HOW TO HELP A STUDENT OF CONCERN: A GUIDE FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

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Part I – Introduction

Salve Regina University is committed to the health and safety of all members of our community. To safeguard our community the Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) has developed a comprehensive reporting system to share appropriate information so students can receive or stay connected to the academic support and student wellness services they need. This reporting system is one element of a safe and supportive campus community.

This guide is designed as a reference and resource for faculty and staff members and to support the training efforts of the University. It specifically provides faculty and staff with information about how to seek assistance and report behaviors of concern. Additional information is provided about managing difficult situations, behavioral signs that warrant concern, as well as resources for assisting students in accessing resources and services at Salve Regina.

Responding to Students of Concern

Within the academic setting various manifestations of student behavior can cause great concern to faculty and staff. The purpose of this guide is to provide faculty and staff with basic tools to respond to these concerns.

- Part I (this section) includes general guidelines for responding to students, Salve Regina resources and documentation procedures.
- Part II includes strategies for dealing with **disruptive** students in the classroom and in other work environments– on campus, or in the online environment.
- Part III includes a brief description of **behavior patterns**, suggestions for appropriate responses, and decision trees for specific interventions.

The decision trees and information are designed to assist you in formulating a plan of action based on the student’s behavior and to identify campus resources that can assist you. **It is important to note that the University does not expect you to assume the role of counselor, therapist or police officer.** For those responsibilities, Salve Regina has trained professionals who are ready to assist you with students who are of concern to you.

In situations when a student is severely impaired or potentially dangerous, Salve Regina Safety & Security will need to be alerted. Salve Regina Safety & Security is also available to assist individual departments in formulating their own safety plans in accordance with their physical layout, degree, and nature of student contact and role within the University.

Faculty and staff can play an invaluable role in helping students who are in distress. Your expression of interest, concern, and compassion is an important factor toward students

seeking the assistance they need. Dean of Students (DOS), Counseling Services, Disability Services, Salve Regina Safety & Security and administrators stand ready to assist you. We hope this guide will help you to identify a potentially difficult situation and provide you with specific ideas and resources when you encounter student behaviors that are of concern.

We encourage faculty and staff to document incidents using the [BIT Student of Concern Form](#) and submit the form to the Office of the Dean of Students (DOS). A student will have a right to see the Student of Concern Form. Potential interventions will be determined on a case by case basis.

It is important to recognize that dealing with disruptive or distressed students can be psychologically and emotionally difficult. Consequently, it can be very helpful to discuss these issues with a colleague or supervisor or seek professional stress debriefing assistance through the University's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Coastline EAP, at (800) 445-1195. You may also contact the Salve Regina Human Resources Office at 341-2137 if you have questions or require additional information about the Employee Assistance Program.

Salve Regina University Resources for Students

Salve Regina provides many services to support academic and personal success. A brief conversation with a student in which you point him or her in the right direction can sometimes be sufficient to reduce stress. The Division of Student Affairs offers a wide variety of support services including:

Counseling Services, 341-2919

Counseling Services is available free to full-time undergraduate students and provides a safe and welcoming atmosphere conducive to the discussion of personal concerns. These interactions are confidential and are performed in accordance with the legal and professional guidelines of the State of Rhode Island. Counselors address the problems commonly experienced by college students of all ages and collaborate with the student to increase self-understanding and develop the skills necessary to overcome personal concerns. Counseling Services is located in the garden level of Miley and is open Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Student Health Services, 341-2904

Health Services offers acute, chronic and urgent care on site and refer to Newport Hospital Emergency Department for emergency care. Follow-up care is provided after discharge to facilitate recovery. The Student Health Center is located in the garden level of Miley.

Academic Center for Excellence (ACE), 341-2226

The Academic Center for Excellence offers support to students in four key areas: Subject Tutoring, the Writing Center, Disability Services, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Services are appropriate for students at all levels of ability and academic performance, i.e. for struggling students as well as for advanced students seeking to raise their level of performance. Drop-in service is available for writing assignments; and all

tutoring, whether subject or writing, is available by appointment.

Disability Services at the Academic Center for Excellence, **341-3150**, ensures students with disabling conditions equal and integrated access to all university programs and services in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Students with documented disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations, modifications, and/or assistance that afford them equal access to the university's academic and non-academic programs and services.

Office of International Programs, 341-2372

The Office of International Programs actively promotes international and inter-cultural understanding and enriches the curricular and co-curricular environment by facilitating the exchange of people and ideas and assisting in the development of the skills and attitudes necessary for graduates to function as global citizens. The Office of International Programs is located in Drexel Hall.

Office of the Dean of Students (DOS), 341-2145

The Student Conduct program within the Office of the Dean of Students is committed to an educational and developmental process that balances the interest of individual students with the interests of the University community. DOS is located in Miley Hall, room 118.

Office of Multicultural Programs, 341-2480

The Office of Multicultural Programs works to support the advancement of the Mercy vision of the University as well as its strategic direction. The Office's main aim is to facilitate the engagement of differences in a manner that allows students to learn from the diversity of perspectives, experiences, and traditions that exist within the University community. In this culture diverse groups are not just acknowledged but accepted, respected, and appreciated throughout our University. The Office of Multicultural Programs is located in Walgreen Hall.

When to Call Salve Regina Safety & Security

You should call Salve Regina Safety & Security at 341-2325 if the incident is nearing the level of crisis. A crisis exists whenever a person's behavior poses imminent danger of:

- causing or threatening harm to self or others,
- impeding lawful activities of other members of the campus community,
- interfering with the health, safety, or wellbeing of other members of the Salve Regina community and/or,
- experiencing a health emergency.

If you are ever unsure of whether or not a crisis exists, err on the side of caution and call Salve Regina Safety and Security Services at 341-5555 for assistance. A dispatcher will either coordinate a police response or give you information and/or referrals to assist the student in need.

To reach Salve Regina Safety & Security call:

- 341-2325 for guidance or advice on issues of concern
- 911 from campus phones for emergencies

Salve Regina Medical Leave of Absence Policy

Salve Regina students may apply for a Medical Leave of Absence (a separation of the student from the university) if they experience medical or psychological conditions that significantly impair their ability to function successfully and safely in their role as a student. It is expected that the time a student takes away from the University will be used for treatment and recovery. Requests for Medical Leaves of Absence are coordinated through the Office of the Dean of Students.

Student Privacy

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Generally, post-secondary institutions must have written permission from the student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions:

- School officials with legitimate educational interest;
- Other schools to which a student is transferring;
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
- Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
- Accrediting organizations;
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

For more information see: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

A major goal of the HIPAA Act is to assure that individuals' health information is properly protected while allowing the flow of health information needed to provide and promote high quality health care and to protect the public's health and well-being. The Rule strikes a balance that permits important uses of information, while protecting the privacy of people who seek care and healing. Salve Regina Student Counseling and Health Services records are protected under HIPAA. For more information see: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/>

Part II – General Guidelines for Students of Concern

Preventing Classroom Disruption

Faculty members recognize the special responsibilities placed upon them to encourage learning, demonstrate respect for students, and observe the regulations of the university to promote the advancement of knowledge. Students are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior toward other members of the college community. Disruptive students, whether in the classroom or online, hinder the academic process and negatively impact student learning. Disruptive student conduct is prohibited by Salve Regina's Student Conduct Code.

What constitutes disruption?

Disruption, as applied to the academic setting, means behaviors that interfere with the right of other students to learn or of the instructors to teach.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Persistently speaking without being recognized
- Persistent use of cell phones, beepers, etc.
- Personal insults
- Interrupting other speakers
- Distracting the class from the subject of discussion
- Refusal to comply with faculty direction
- In extreme cases, physical threats, harassing behavior (contact Salve Regina Safety and Security Services)

Prevention

The best time to deal with disruption is before it begins. Faculty can take steps to reduce the likelihood of disruptive behaviors in the classroom.

- Explicitly state expectations for conduct in the syllabus. This may include:
 - Participation in class activities
 - Guidelines for communication
 - Expectations about the use of cell phones and pagers
 - Attendance/tardiness policy
 - Late assignment policy
- Explain consequences of inappropriate behavior
- Review these expectations with students during first class meeting
- Model respectful communication with your students
- Facilitate respectful exchange of ideas among your students
- Respond to problems consistently and in a timely manner
- Consider applying a classroom behavior contract (See Appendix)

Guidelines for Responding to Students of Concern

Distressed Behavior

Student demonstrates distressed behavior but is not disruptive.

Distressed behavior includes: tearfulness, anxiety, irritation, depression, or inability to concentrate.



Obtain consultation from Student Counseling Services if needed.
341-2919

Speak with student privately about what you are observing and your concerns if feasible.



Inform student of assistance available on campus (pages 4-5). If possible, help the student call for an appointment or walk them over to Counseling Services



File a **Student of Concern Report** with the Office of the Dean of Students.



If distressed behavior persists and/or the student is unwilling to seek assistance contact the Office of the Dean of Students to identify assistance and determine options.

Disruptive Behavior

Student demonstrates inappropriate behavior that is disruptive or abusive in nature.

Disruptive behavior includes: Unrelated or bizarre comments, defiance, use of inappropriate/offensive language abuse, anger or focusing attention on self.



Act immediately to stop inappropriate behavior and to prevent escalation. Speak with student confidentially when possible; clarify appropriate behavior, set expectations and consequences.

Consult with Office of the Dean of Students for assistance. 341-2145.↓
You may ask the student to leave for the remainder of the class or activity as a result of the disruptive behavior, or at any point if the behavior continues.

If student refuses, call Salve Regina Safety and Security
341-2325



File a **Student of Concern Report** with the Office of the Dean of Students.

Provide your observations to Salve Regina Safety and Security for their incident report.



Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from Salve Regina's Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
800-445-1195

Dangerous Behavior

Crisis Event

A crisis event exists whenever a person's behavior poses imminent danger of:

*Causing harm to self or others,

*Impeding the lawful activities of other members of the campus community or causing significant property damage, or
*Interfering with the health, safety or well-being of other members of the Salve Regina community.↓

Call Salve Regina Safety and Security
341-2325

Protect the safety of others and self.

Depending on incident, buy time with the student by talking calmly and with concern, if possible, until assistance arrives.



Provide your observations to Salve Regina Safety and Security Services for their incident report.

File a **Student of Concern Report** with the Office of the Dean of Students.



Obtain assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from Salve Regina's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 800-445-1195

Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Situations

Office and front line staff often have face to face contact with students. They may be the initial responders to students who are in crisis, angry, verbally abusive, or potentially dangerous. These general suggestions can be utilized with the behavior pattern “dos” and “don’ts” identified in Part III of this document. The following guidelines provide general principles for effective verbal intervention.

1. Remain Calm

Remember that the verbally escalating person is beginning to lose control. If the person senses that you are also losing control, the situation may get worse. Try to keep your emotions under control, even when challenged, insulted or threatened. This may be easier said than done, especially when a student is making threats, or using abusive language, but it is important in de-escalating the situation.

2. Be Empathetic

Try not to judge or discount the feelings of others. Whether or not you think the feelings are justified, those feelings are real to the other person. You may want to acknowledge them by saying things like, *“I understand that this is very frustrating for you.”* or *“I’m sorry that you’re feeling distressed about....”*

3. Watch Your Body Language

As a person becomes increasingly agitated, he or she will pay less attention to your words and more attention to your body language. Be aware of your use of space, posture, and gestures. Avoid gestures that might seem threatening. Make sure your nonverbal behavior is consistent with your verbal message.

4. Respect Personal Space

Maintain a safe distance (2 - 3 feet) from an agitated person. Invading personal space tends to increase the individual’s anxiety and may lead to increased agitation.

5. Keep It Simple

Be clear and direct in your message. Avoid jargon and complicated choices. A person who is beginning to lose rational control may not be processing information as he or she usually does. Complex messages may increase anxiety and make self-control more difficult.

6. Set and Enforce Reasonable Limits

If the person becomes belligerent, defensive or disruptive be sure to state limits and directives clearly and concisely. When setting limits, offer choices and consequences to the acting-out individual. For example, *“If you calm down, I can continue to assist you. If not, you will need to leave.”*

Consider saying *“It’s not my role to make that kind of decision here at the University. Let me locate someone who can help you.”* or *“It’s hard for me to understand what you are saying when you are shouting. Please lower your voice so that I can better help you.”*

7. Request Assistance When Necessary

- **If you perceive any threat, call Salve Regina Safety and Security Services at 341-2325. In such situations your safety and those of others in your area are of utmost importance.** The use of telephone “code words” or alarm buttons may be a good strategy and should be discussed and developed within your department.
- If the student is **angry or demanding** but you do not sense an immediate threat, he or she can be referred to your supervisor or to **Counseling Services, 341- 2919.**

8. Document the Incident – Submit the [BIT Student of Concern Form](#) to the Office of the Dean of Students.

Core Elements of Communicating with a Student in Distress

- Confirm that you have heard what the student has said.
- Express concern for the student.
- Refer the student to Salve Regina resources or contact Salve Regina Safety and Security Services.

Part III - Student Behaviors

The Distressed Student

You may become aware of students in distress in a variety of ways. Students may directly communicate their issues and distress to you. This may occur in private or in front of others. You may also sense there is something amiss with a student on the basis of the behavior they exhibit or on the basis of some changes in their demeanor over time.

- Distressed students may express heightened apprehension and fear verbally or behaviorally. These concerns will likely interfere with their learning and ability to appropriately participate in class activities. You may notice agitation, physical shaking of hands, or a trembling voice with students who are anxious.
- Distressed students may appear tense, anxious, and mistrustful. These students may tend to interpret minor oversights as significant personal rejection or may overreact to insignificant occurrences. They may be overly concerned with fairness and being treated equally.
- Distressed student behavior may be indicated by a change over time from actively engaged and involved to a noticeable loss of interest in classroom or other activities. Normally outgoing students may seem to retreat from interaction and involvement. Attendance issues may become a problem for students in distress. Depending on your relationship with the student, he/she may verbally communicate their distress with you.
- Distressed students may share events or incidents of discrimination, harassment, sexual or physical violence. This may be expressed through various forms of communication.
- Distressed students may appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol in your class or at your office or an event.
- Distressed students can also be students who are physically ill or who are experiencing a medical emergency event.

DO...

- Express compassion without intimate friendship.
- Communicate your concern if appropriate.
- Be specific and clear regarding the standards of behavior you expect if the student's behaviors are interfering with classroom activities.
- Listen for indications the student may be suicidal such as statements like "*Life doesn't seem worth living*" or "*I just feel I can't go on anymore.*"
- Share your intention of referring them for assistance.
- In cases where behavior or other signs of drug or alcohol abuse is evident contact Salve Regina Safety and Security Services at 341-2325.

- In cases of medical emergencies always contact Salve Regina Safety and Security Services at 341-2325

DON'T...

- Take responsibility for their emotional state by saying *“I’ll take care of it for you.”*
- Discount their distress by saying *“It’s not really that bad”* or *“You’ve really got nothing to worry about.”*
- Assure the student that you are his/her friend.
- Be overly warm and nurturing.
- Be cute or humorous.
- Challenge or agree with any mistaken or illogical beliefs.
- Say anything else that might discount the personal significance or intensity of the student’s feelings.
- Agree to maintain student’s confidentiality.

Distressed Student DecisionTree

- If appropriate, speak with the student privately about what you are observing and your concerns. Inform the student of assistance available through CAPS. If appropriate, help them call for an appointment or walk them over if possible.
- If there is potential for harm contact Salve Regina Safety and Security Services at 341-2325.
- Seek consultation from Counseling Services at 341-2919 or Dean of Students at 341-2145 if needed.
- ↓
- If Counseling Services or the Dean of Students is not available, and/or if behavior or verbal expression of distress is severe, or there is the potential of harm, contact Salve Regina Safety and Security Services at 341-2325.
- If Alcohol or Drugs are evident contact Salve Regina Safety and Security Services at 341-2325.
- If the student discloses events or behavior involving harassment or discrimination contact the Dean of Students at 341-2145.
- ↓
- File a [BIT Student of Concern Form](#) with the Office of the Dean of Students.
- or-
- Provide your observations to Salve Regina Safety & Security for their incident report
- ↓
- Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from Salve Regina’s EAP through Coastline EAP at 800-445-1195.

The Disruptive Student

Often, large amounts of time and energy are given to students who make excessive demands on your time. They may seek to control your time and unconsciously believe that the amount of time they receive is a reflection of their worth. These students may also have difficulty keeping their comments consistent with the activities or with the topic or issue being discussed. Disruptive behavior can include verbal aggression.

DO...

- Set limits with them, “*Excuse me; I need to attend to other things.*”
- Remain calm and professional. Be sensitive to both verbal and nonverbal cues exhibited by a student who seems to be verbally aggressive.
- Intervene as soon as you hear or see the undesirable behavior. Be consistent with your intervention.
- Give the class a break and ask the student to meet outside of the class to speak privately.
- Briefly and directly convey to the student that verbally aggressive behavior is unacceptable and that the matter must be resolved.
- If, in your best judgment, the verbally aggressive student’s threats to create a safety risk, **contact Salve Regina Safety and Security Services immediately**. Use a phone out of sight/hearing of individual if possible or request someone else call. Report details of the incident.

DON’T...

- Wait until you have become too involved to seek assistance
- Let them use you as their only source of support.
- Get trapped into giving advice, “*Why don’t you ... etc.?*”
- Get defensive.
- Engage in a power struggle with the student.
- Respond with anger.
- Allow the disruptive behaviors continue.

Disruptive Student Decision Tree

- Seek consultation from Counseling Services at 341-2919 or Dean of Students at 341-2145 if needed.
- Speak with the student privately about what you are observing and your concerns. Establish or reinforce behavioral expectations, or limits as necessary.
 - ↓
 - If the student is excessively demanding, threatening or refuses to comply with faculty or staff direction, contact Salve Regina Safety and Security Services at 341-2325.
 - ↓
 - File a [BIT Student of Concern Form](#) with the Dean of Students
 - or-
 - Provide your observations to Salve Regina Safety and Security Services for their incident report.
 - ↓
 - Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from Salve Regina’s EAP at 800-445-1195.

The Potentially Dangerous Student

Certain behaviors may signal imminent danger to self or others. For example: physical or verbal threats, harassment, expressing personal insults, refusal to comply with directions of college officials or faculty members, and continued escalation of threats might signal imminent danger.

Dramatic changes in behavior over time may indicate the potential for dangerous behavior or harm to self. Actively engaged and involved students may begin to demonstrate a loss of interest in classroom or other activities. Normally outgoing students may seem to retreat from interaction and involvement. Depending on your relationship with these students, they may communicate their sense of despondency or outline a specific plan to do harm to themselves.

You may also experience students whose behavior may be bizarre, eccentric or erratic. They may display disorganized speech and behavior, an inappropriate or complete lack of emotion, bizarre behavior that may include expressing hallucinations, strange beliefs that involve a serious misinterpretation of reality, social withdrawal, or an inability to connect with or track normal communication. While these behaviors, by themselves, may not indicate a potential for violence or danger, they may indicate the need for treatment or hospitalization. It should be noted that students who are experiencing these behaviors can be unpredictable and should be approached with caution.

DO...

- Contact Salve Regina Safety and Security Services in situations where you believe violence is imminent.
- Immediately report students who share suicidal thoughts.
- Recognize that psychotic states can involve extreme emotion or lack of emotion and intense fear to the point of paranoia.
- Respond to the student with concern and kindness, and with firm reasoning. *“I can see you’re very upset. Please tell me how I can assist you.”*
- Articulate your specific concerns and state that you can see they need help.
- Be aware that the student may show no emotions or intense emotions.
- Ask another staff or student to call for help if needed.

DON’T...

- Assume the student will be able to care for him/herself.
- Agitate the student by arguing with their unrealistic beliefs.
- Assume the student comprehends what you are saying or doing.
- Release the student to the care of a roommate or friend without seeking professional consultation.
- Attempt to probe the delusional thinking.
- Assume responsibility by personally trying to resolve their issues.

Potentially Dangerous Student Decision Tree

- If the student is expressing or acting out behaviors that demonstrate the potential for imminent harm to self or others seek immediate assistance.

- Contact Salve Regina Safety & Security at 341-2325.
↓
- If the student is expressing or exhibiting behaviors that do not demonstrate the potential for imminent violence seek consultation or refer the student to get assistance with Counseling Services. This may include walking the student to Counseling Services, if possible. Counseling Services is located in Miley Hall, garden level.
↓
- File a [BIT Student of Concern Form](#) with the Dean of Students.
-or-
- Provide your observations to Salve Regina Safety and Security Services for their incident report
↓
- Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from Salve Regina's EAP through Coastline EAP at 800-445-1195.

Appendix

Campus and Community Resources

Dean of Students	341-2145
Associate Dean of Students	341-2209
Counseling Services	341-2919
Academic Center for Excellence	341-2226
Health Services	341-2904
Residence Life	341-2210
Disability Services	341-3150
Office of International Programs	341-2372
Office of Multicultural Programs	341-2480

If offices noted above are closed when you attempt to contact them contact Salve Regina Safety and Security Services at 341-2325.

Sample Student Behavior Contract

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

I expect students to demonstrate restraint and maturity at ALL times; both in class and in their groups.

Being courteous in class and groups does not mean that you have to agree with everything that is being said. However, you will rarely get your way with anybody in life by being rude, overly aggressive or just plain hostile. If you disagree with me (or I with you) it is a good idea to wait and discuss the situation when you are not angry.

All interaction with your professor and other students in the class must be of a positive nature. Disrespectful and rude behavior towards the professor or fellow students will not be tolerated and any student who consistently violates this rule will be asked not to return to the classroom.

Failure to demonstrate common courtesy and respect toward others will result in your removal from the class.

Also, I ask that you do not study material from other classes during this class. If you feel that you must spend our class time studying or doing homework, please go to the library.

ACCEPTANCE OF CLASS TERMS

I have read all portions of the online syllabus and class schedule and have been given an opportunity to ask questions for clarification, if necessary. I further understand that all of the requirements and expectations will apply equally to all students in this class, including myself.

I understand that not every rule is listed in the syllabus. No professor can and should list every rule imaginable. I know right from wrong, and will use my common sense and behave in a responsible manner.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Student Number: _____

Date: _____

Print name, sign, date, and turn this page in to Professor _____.