## Indicators of Distress: What to Look For

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Indicators</th>
<th>Physical Indicators</th>
<th>Psychological Indicators</th>
<th>Safety Risk Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sudden decline in quality of work/grades</td>
<td>Marked changes in physical appearance (deterioration in grooming or hygiene, significant weight gain/loss)</td>
<td>Self-disclosure of personal distress, including family problems, financial difficulties, suicidal thoughts, grief</td>
<td>Unprovoked anger or hostility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repeated absences</td>
<td>Excessive fatigue or sleep disturbance</td>
<td>Unusual/disproportional emotional response to events</td>
<td>Physical violence (shoving, grabbing, assault, use of weapon)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disorganized performance</td>
<td>Intoxication, hangovers, smelling of alcohol</td>
<td>Excessive tearfulness</td>
<td>Implying or making a direct threat to harm self or others</td>
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<td>Multiple requests for extensions</td>
<td>Disoriented or &quot;out of it&quot;</td>
<td>Panic reactions</td>
<td>Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, rage, worthlessness, isolation, despair, acting out, suicidal ideations, violent behaviors, or other &quot;cries for help&quot;</td>
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<td>Disengagement through failure to hand in assignments, missing exams, and lack of participation</td>
<td>Garbled, tangential, disconnected, or slurred speech</td>
<td>Irritability or unusual apathy</td>
<td>Stalking or harassing</td>
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<td>Overly demanding of faculty/staff time and attention</td>
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<td>Verbal abuse (e.g. taunting, badgering, intimidation)</td>
<td>Communicating threats via email, texting, phone calls</td>
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<td>Bizarre content in writing/presentations</td>
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<td>Increased need for personal (rather than academic) counseling</td>
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</table>

We welcome your feedback. Email: casemanagement@rit.edu with comments and suggestions. Version 1.1 – Spring 2021

## Awareness

Students in distress may be struggling with academic or personal challenges.

Remember that you are in a unique position to identify students who may be in need of help.

## Communication

Sharing your concern directly with the student and reaching out to campus / community resources are important first steps in the helping process.

A Tiger Concern report is a way to communicate your concern about a student to get them connected to resources. The report can be accessed here: rit.edu/reporting-incident

## Engagement

Students may not be aware of what resources are available or how to find help. It’s okay to check in with students to see how they’re doing.

Demonstrating a culture of care and compassion strengthens the campus community.

## Resources and Tips

Consider the tips below to help refer students to appropriate resources.

**Safety First**

The top priority is always the welfare of the campus community. Do not hesitate to call for help if someone is displaying threatening or violent behavior.

**Listen Sensitive & Carefully**

Use a calm voice and a non-confrontational approach. Avoid threatening, humiliating, and intimidating responses.

**Reach Out**

Engage students early on and set limits on disruptive behavior.

**Be Direct**

Don’t be afraid to ask students directly if they are under the influence of alcohol/drugs, feeling confused, or having thoughts of harming themselves or others.

**Follow Through**

Ensure the student knows the physical location of the identified resource. Consider walking over together to help them get connected when possible and appropriate.

**Be Proactive**

Always document your interactions with distressed students. Consult with your department chair/supervisor after any incidents of concern.
**DO...**

- Make time and space available to speak to students
- Use empathy and active listening skills
- Connect students with available resources
- Ask for additional help if needed

**DON’T...**

- Make promises you can’t keep
- Try to “fix” everything
- Pass judgement or dismiss the student’s needs
- Wait to refer if you are concerned about a student

**WHOM TO CONTACT | Follow the chart to determine next steps**

Is the student a danger to self / others or otherwise in need of immediate assistance for another reason?

- **YES**
  - The student’s conduct is clearly and imminently reckless, disorderly, dangerous or threatening.
  - RIT Public Safety: 585-475-3333
  - RIT Public Safety Text Line: 585-205-8333
  - Call 911

- **NOT SURE/NO**
  - The student shows signs of distress, but I’m unsure whether it is serious. I’m left feeling uneasy or concerned about the student.
  - I’m not immediately concerned for the student, but the student is having significant difficulties and needs support.
  - Submit a Tiger Concern report at rit.edu/reporting-incident.
  - RIT’s Student Behavior Consultation Team (SBCT), made up of staff from multiple disciplines across campus, will work together to coordinate resources in order to recommend collaborative and purposeful (non-punitive) interventions in response to your submitted concerns.