



Guide for Supporting Students in Distress Who are Working Remotely

As society currently ventures into largely uncharted territory, so do institutions of higher education. While we all encounter paradigm shifts, the stress of social distancing and our own struggles, it is natural for us to turn our thoughts to the challenges our students will be facing. A specific nuance of this shift is that students may show signs of distress that are markedly different from what presents in the traditional classroom. Because of this, the Office of Student Support has created this guide to help educate faculty and staff about the different challenges our students are facing, signs of distress, and to reinforce how to respond and refer when working with a student that may be in distress. It is important to note that not everything here may indicate that a student is in distress, however we should pay special attention to students exhibiting more than one of these behaviors and be especially attentive early in the transition to remote education.

Challenges of Distance Learning (*Particularly in the current Pandemic Environment*)

- Isolation
- Frustration
- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Scarcity of Resources
- Fluid Nature of Decisions
- Multiple External Stressors
- Physical Illness

Signs of Students Experiencing Distress in the Remote Classroom

- References to suicide or self-harm (written or verbal)
- Noted isolation from friends, family or support persons
- Drastic change in physical presentation
- Signs of injury to oneself, which could include cuts or bruises
- Disclosures of anxiety, depression and stress
- Marked change in behavior, mood or relationships
- Impaired speech, garbled, disjointed thoughts
- High levels of irritability, unruly or abusive behavior
- Appearing overly nervous, tense or tearful
- Struggling to make decision
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Threats to others
- Excessive messaging
- Obsessive behavior
- Observed behavior that is markedly different from their usual presentation when accessing learning management system (not logging in, posting comments that do not address discussion prompt etc.)



- Lack of response to messaging or assignment submissions
- Bizarre, paranoid, or confused posting
- Acting erratically as observed by either speaking in a way or at a volume that is incongruent with expectations and norms presented in the class
- Decreased quality of work
- Displays of firearms or weapons

General Tips for Supporting Students through the Transition to Remote Learning

- Take time to review and learn the different resources available to students remotely
- Offer support and expressions of hope.
- Create clear channels for communication and emphasize them to your students
- Be transparent about the issues of transitioning courses and be patient with students through the transition
- Recognize that each student's situation is different and emphasize a willingness to work with students
- Let students know that you want to see them succeed.
- Promote and practice self-care
 - Especially important to be attentive to compassion fatigue and model balance to students.



How to Respond

It is important to realize that when working with a student in distress, there is no such thing as a perfect formula. We all have different abilities and capacities, so it is important to be mindful of your own. In the event you do choose to follow up with a student, the following suggestions are included as a reference.

- Above all, remember you are not alone. Reach out to the Office of Student Support at any point if you need advice or consolation. Contact the office by email at StudentSupport@ubalt.edu or leave a voicemail 410.837.4755. Leave your name, a brief description of your concern, your contact information and a member of our staff will follow up.
- **If you believe that a student is a threat to themselves or others immediately contact the University of Maryland, Baltimore Police Department or local emergency personnel by calling 911.**
- Maintain clear and consistent expectations
 - Given the transition to the remote classroom experience, it is important to re-emphasize and have honest conversations with your students about your expectations. It is entirely possible that some expectations will change. Do your best to communicate this as clearly as possible.
- Whenever possible talk to the student individually.
 - If you need to address the behavior in front of others, do your best to be respectful, non-judgmental, clear, and to follow up with the student after the interaction.
- Listen to the students concerns in a sensitive manner and be thoughtful to offer objective critiques, when necessary.
- Share your hope and desire that the situation improves.
- Schedule a time to do a follow-up with the student to discuss progress and provide additional clarification.
- Refer the student to additional support through the Office of Student Support or other campus resources available remotely.



How to Make a Referral

Student Conduct and Academic Integrity: If you believe that a student has violated the Code of Conduct or Academic Integrity Policy, you may submit a [Community Standards form](#). These submissions will be reviewed by a Senior Hearing Officer within the Office of Student Support. Upon receiving a submitted form, a staff member will follow up with you to gather any additional information. Often in cases when forms are submitted and do not constitute a conduct violation, the Office of Student Support is able to assist with other educational conversations with the student through consultation with faculty, referral to an Assistant Dean or Compass Case management.

With the total shift to online instruction, anxiety for many students will increase. However, the integrity of the learning process will stay paramount. The Office of Student Support strongly encourages faculty to re-emphasize their expectations and provide resources to help support students. These resources might include the [Writing Center](#), [Purdue University Online Writing Lab](#) and [Turnitin](#).

Compass Case Management: If you are worried about a student, please submit a [Compass Case Management Form](#) and the Office of Student Support will review the concerns, gather additional information and try to provide support where possible. The Office of Student Support's Clinical Case Manager, Tony DuLaney, will be available during normal business hours via phone and email. To contact Tony DuLaney, you may call 410.837.5159 or email TDulaney@ubalt.edu.

Disability and Access Services: Faculty can contact the director, Karyn Schulz at kschulz@ubalt.edu or the Disability and Access Services email at das@ubalt.edu. Staff will monitor email and respond to questions and concerns regarding the support for students with disabilities, or provide consultation about how to make referrals, if appropriate.

Consultation: Regardless of your needs, the Office of Student Support is here to help assist you. If you have any questions or would like additional consultation about a student matter, please feel free to contact us at StudentSupport@ubalt.edu or leave a voicemail 410.837.4755 with your name, a brief description of your concern, and your contact information. A member of our staff will follow up with you as soon as possible.

As mentioned above, we are all experiencing a significant shift to all aspects of professional, personal and educational lives. The Office of Student Support thanks every staff and faculty member working to support, educate, and develop our students.



Sources:

Indiana State University Counseling Center: <https://www2.indstate.edu/cns/docs/cns-distance-learning-identifying-and-assisting-distressed-students.pdf>

North Carolina State University Counseling Center: <https://counseling.dasa.ncsu.edu/workshops-and-events/stop-the-stigma/recognizing-students-in-distress/>

The Jed Foundation, Faculty: Tips for Distance Learning:
<https://thejedfoundation.cmail20.com/t/ViewEmail/r/BFAEB13D588B47582540EF23F30FEDED/024296D61D5170AEDCC9454293137CA2>