



STUDENT AFFAIRS

# **Recognizing and Helping Students in Distress**

**A Guide for TCU  
Parents**

# A Guide for Parents

The TCU college experience can be a time of discovery and excitement, and those of us who work with students often see evidence of this. At the same time, we may notice that students' development during their college years - personal, intellectual, moral and psychosocial- can be difficult. They may feel overwhelmed or homesick, they may have trouble fitting in socially or managing their time. Students may also suffer from alcohol abuse, eating disorders, sexual assault, family problems or deaths of loved ones. All of these circumstances may evoke a wide range of responses from students, from mild anxiety or depression to suicidal or homicidal thoughts.

The faculty and staff of the TCU community can help identify students in need of assistance and direct them to the appropriate resources at the university.

## **Defining a Student in Crisis:**

Students, or anyone for that matter, may experience a *crisis* if their stress level outweighs their coping resources.

There could be a variety of reasons for a student to be in distress. Whatever the cause **parents may be able to identify students and refer them to appropriate resources for help.** The following information will provide you with some guidance with this process.



Aspire



Engage



Achieve



## **Key Indicators: What to Look For**

### **Academic Indicators:**

- Deterioration in quality of work
- A drop in academic status
- A negative change in classroom performance
- Missed assignments
- Repeated absence from class
- Disorganized or erratic performance
- Essays or creative work which indicate extremes of hopelessness, social isolation, rage, or despair
- Continual seeking of special accommodations (late papers, extensions, postponed exams, etc.)
- Not participating in group projects with other students

### **Behavioral Indicators:**

- Direct or indirect statements indicating distress, family problems or other difficulties
- Anger or hostility that seems unprovoked
- Threatening others in person or via the internet
- Impulsive behavior, acting out
- More withdrawn or more animated than usual
- Distorted thinking or deterioration of cognitive functioning
- Tearfulness
- Isolation, seeing student on campus frequently alone

### **Physical Indicators:**

- Deterioration in physical appearance
- Lack of personal hygiene
- Excessive fatigue
- Visible changes in weight
- Attending class bleary-eyed, intoxicated or smelling of alcohol/ drugs
- Signs of self injurious/ self-destructive behavior such as scars from cutting on arms

# What You Can Do

By using the above key indicators, TCU parents and family members can help recognize students who may be in distress. There are several options that you can take when dealing with this situation:

## **Discuss Your Concerns with the Student**

- Talk with the student and listen to the response
- Remember that talking about the problem (or crisis) with the student does not make it worse

## **Contact On-Campus Resources:**

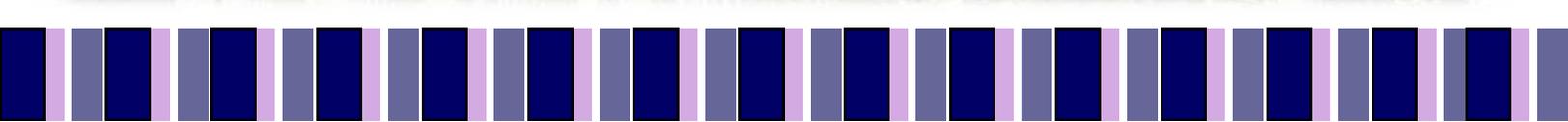
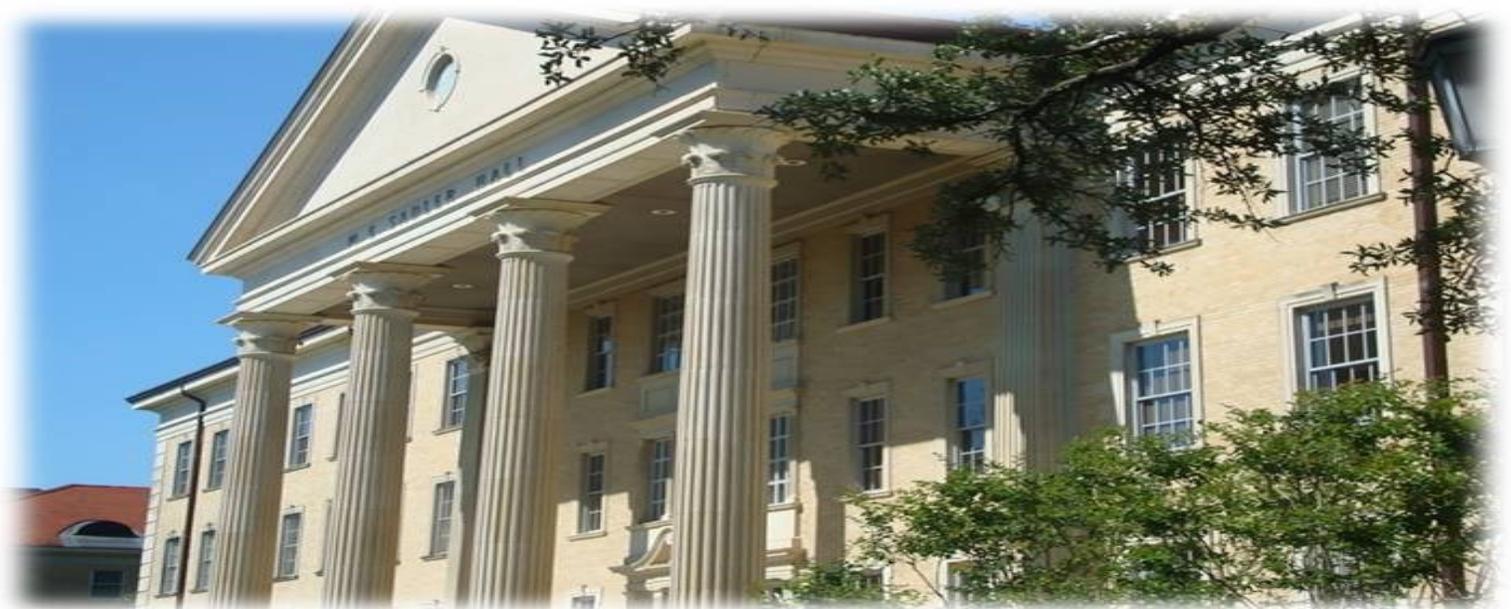
*If you have concerns about a student's imminent safety- notify **CAMPUS POLICE** immediately (817-257-7777).*

## **Campus Life– Dean's Office (817-257-7926):**

The Campus Life Dean's Office is available to provide a comprehensive response to issues impeding collegiate success for students. A dean in our office is available to assist with student concerns, maintain community and University standards and refer students to the appropriate community resource.

## **Counseling Center (817-257-7863)**

The Counseling & Mental Health Center provide a variety of professional clinical services including counseling, psychiatry, consultation and referrals. Services are available at no cost to all current TCU students. An on-call counselor is available to consult about students of concern.



## Issues to Consider

Please do not promise confidentiality, particularly if a student represents a safety risk to him/ herself or others. Students who are a threat to themselves or others need immediate professional intervention. Assurances of absolute confidentiality may impede that process.

If a student needs help, but does not want to interact with campus offices, you may contact or refer the student to one of the off-campus resources listed on the next page. However, if a student appears to be at risk for suicide or homicide, **you must contact emergency officials immediately.** To gauge whether a student may be at risk to themselves or others, answer the following questions:

- Has the student stated an intention to die or cause self harm?
- Has the student stated an intention to harm others?
- Has the student reported that he or she attempted suicide or self-injury or put others at risk of harm in the recent past?
- Is the student unwilling to access support from family, friends, and others?
- Has the student left you with an uneasy feeling with respect to his or her safety or the safety of others?

***If the answer to any of these question is “YES” contact Campus Police, Campus Life, or the Counseling Center immediately.***

You should contact the Campus Life office if you have answered “yes” to any of the following questions in the “*What to Look For*” section on the previous page. These indicators could be signs of distress for the student and can be addressed in either the Campus Life office or the Counseling Center.

## On-Campus Resources

TCU Police  
www.cap.tcu.edu  
257-7777

Campus Life  
www.campuslife.tcu.edu  
257-7926

Alcohol & Drug Education  
www.ade.tcu.edu  
257-7100

Counseling Center  
www.counseling.tcu.edu  
257-7863

Office of Religious and Spiritual Life  
www.faith.tcu.edu  
257-7830

Health Center  
www.healthcenter.tcu.edu  
257-7940

Center for Academic Services  
www.acs.tcu.edu  
257-7486

## Off-Campus Resources

Fort Worth Police ..... 817-335-4222  
Baylor Health Fort Worth Hospital.....817-922-1162  
John Peter Smith Hospital ..... 817-702-3431  
Mesa Springs Behavioral Health Hospital ..... 817-292-4600  
Texas Health Springwood Hospital ..... 817-355-7777  
Rape Crisis & Victim Services..... 817-927-2737  
Safe Haven..... 1-877-701-7233  
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline ..... 1-800-273-8255