

# **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 Counseling Center 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 and Make a Referral**

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. Consider the following when supporting students:

- Above all, remember you are not alone. Contact the Counseling Center (410-617-2273 Monday-Friday, 8:30am-5:00 pm) for consultation. You will be connected with a counselor to discuss your concerns and develop a plan to support the student.
- If you believe that a student is a threat to themselves or others immediately contact Campus Police or 911. Campus Police can readily identify the student's permanent address and emergencies contacts.
- 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.
-



**Student Health and Education Services (x5055):  
Seton Court 02A**

**Academic Advising and Support Center (x5050):**

- Academic adjustment student concerns, especially if the student is missing class. Advising and registration support.

**The Study (x2104):**

- Peer and professional tutoring, organization and time management coaching, and academic success workshops. The Study is offering meetings and workshops remotely.

**Dean of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies (x5547)**

- Academic policy and implementation concerns
- Other academic concerns. Medical problem or life events are interfering with academics. Seeking an extended excused absence. If a student is acting out in a disruptive or bizarre way or has expressed concerning thoughts.

**Graduate Student Services (x2353):**

- Advocates for graduate students, as well as offers resources, programs, and information to enhance the graduate student experience.

**When a student has experienced the death of a loved one:**

Whenever you meet or work with a student who is dealing with the illness of a loved one or who has experienced a recent loss, please connect them with one of the following resources:

- Campus Ministry (x2768) will reach out to students to offer both spiritual and personal support. Every student will be invited to solicit prayers and alert the Loyola community about a death in their immediate family.
- Dean of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies (x5547) will notify faculty and send an e-mail to the student as appropriate. The Associate Dean or Dean will work to help students talk to their professors about making up missed work and help put academic supports in place as needed.
- Counseling Center (x2273) will offer personal support and help students explore all of the ways their situation might be impacting them. When a counselor meets with the student, they will assess any other needs that they may be having, and we will offer individual or group support (the Facing Loss group has proven to be very helpful to students). A counselor can also explain how being connected to others can be an important part of functioning during difficult times.