

# Recognizing and Supporting Students in Crisis



FOR EMERGENCIES, CONCERNS OR CRISIS

## Where do I start?

If you are concerned about a student, don't let uncertainty stop you from taking action. The University of St. Thomas is committed to supporting students in crisis. This guide was developed to help you **Recognize, Respond to, Refer and Report** concerning student behavior. For additional information, talk to your supervisor, department chair, or **contact the Dean of Students Office at (651) 962-6050**.

## Responding to Students in Crisis

### Stay safe

When a student displays threatening or potentially violent behavior, your safety, the student's safety and the welfare of the campus community are the top priorities. Coordinated professional help and follow-up care are effective ways to help prevent suicide and violence.

### Weigh your concerns

If you are concerned about a student, consult your department chair, supervisor and/or the Dean of Students Office. Promptly report safety concerns and Student Conduct Code violations.

### De-escalate and support

Distressed students can be sensitive. Avoid threatening, potentially embarrassing or intimidating statements. Help students connect with the resources they need.

### Clarify expectations

Set early limits on disruptive or self-destructive behavior. Remind students verbally or in writing (e.g., in the syllabus) of standards/expectations for conduct, and of possible consequences for disruptive behavior. Refer to the online Student Conduct Code at [www.stthomas.edu/policies](http://www.stthomas.edu/policies).

### Listen sensitively and carefully

Vulnerable students need to be heard and supported. They may find it difficult to articulate their distress. Ask them directly if they feel their functioning is impaired or if they have thoughts of harming themselves or others.

### Share what you know

State and federal laws and university policies mandate reporting in many crisis situations. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) allows faculty and staff to report student health and safety concerns to relevant campus offices trained to handle situations with sensitivity and care. Taking appropriate action does not violate a student's privacy.

### Consult to coordinate a timely response

Consult with appropriate university personnel to coordinate care for the student. Always report serious or persistent behavior to the Dean of Students Office as soon as possible. Misconduct may be formally addressed through the student conduct process and additional campus resources may be necessary to help reduce or eliminate disruptive behaviors.

### Follow up

Once you have referred a student in crisis, it is helpful (but not obligatory) for you to follow-up in their ongoing care. Your firsthand knowledge and personal connection to this student is valuable in understanding and appropriately responding to their situation.

### Take care

Supporting students in crisis can take a toll on your personal well-being. Make sure to acknowledge what you've been through and receive adequate support.

## Resources

for faculty, staff, undergrad and graduate students

### EMERGENCY

UST Public Safety: (651) 962-5100 • Emergency: (651) 962-5555  
[stthomas.edu/publicsafety](http://stthomas.edu/publicsafety)

- Immediate emergency services- threatening or dangerous behavior
- Active shooter and campus safety trainings
- USTALERT campus-wide notification system for crisis notification and response

### FOLLOW-UP, SUPPORT & TRAINING

#### Dean of Students Office:

(651) 962-6050

[stthomas.edu/deanofstudents](http://stthomas.edu/deanofstudents)

- Strategies for dealing with students of concern
- Supporting a student in crisis or trauma
- Third-party facilitation and informal mediation services

#### Center for Well-Being

(651) 962-6750

Health Services: [stthomas.edu/healthservices](http://stthomas.edu/healthservices)

- Primary & Urgent Care, women's health, Travel Clinic, wellness services
- Health insurance questions and explanation of benefits

Counseling and Psychological Services: [stthomas.edu/counseling](http://stthomas.edu/counseling)

- 24/7 Phone Counseling Line (855) 835-9832 or (651) 962-6750 option 4
- Individual and group counseling for students
- Crisis counseling and alcohol assessments
- Consultation, outreach and referrals
- Faculty & staff training on identifying & assisting high-risk students

#### Human Resources/HR Partners

(651) 962-6510

[one.stthomas.edu/human-resources](http://one.stthomas.edu/human-resources)

- Support and advice on employee relations, conflict resolution and other workplace issues
- Employee Assistance Program: 1-800-964-3577
- Resources for managing stress and other reactions to challenging situations

#### Disability Resources

(651) 962-6315

[stthomas.edu/enhancementprog](http://stthomas.edu/enhancementprog)

- Accommodations for students with all types of disabilities including but not limited to mental health diagnoses, learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder, chronic medical conditions, visual, mobility, and hearing disabilities
- Faculty and staff consultation on issues related to students with disabilities

#### Care Team

(651) 962-6050

[stthomas.edu/ustcares/faculty/careteam](http://stthomas.edu/ustcares/faculty/careteam)

- Convened by the Dean of Students Office
- Interdepartmental committee
- Works to effectively support the retention and success of students who seem to be facing challenges

## RECOGNIZE

## RESPOND

## REFER

## REPORT

### “Not sure what, but something’s wrong”

- Disturbing content in paper/emails
- Decline in academic performance
- Excessive absenteeism
- Irrational or bizarre behavior
- Sudden change in demeanor (e.g. an extroverted student withdrawn, an organized student forgetful, etc.)

“I noticed you (haven’t been in class for 2 weeks) and I’d like to check in with you to see how you’re doing. I’m concerned about you.”

- Express concern and care
- Give an example of a time that the student’s behavior has worried you
- Listen to and believe targeted student’s responses
- Be supportive and encouraging if student agrees to get help

**Urgent:** Public Safety  
(651) 962-5555

**Advice and consultation:**

\* Counseling & Psychological Services  
(651) 962-6750

\*Dean of Students Office  
(651) 962-6050

\*Academic Counseling  
(651) 962-6300

• Dean of Students Office  
(651) 962-6050

• Department Academic  
Dean

### Depression, self-harm, suicidal risk

- Significant changes in appearance, behavior or personal hygiene
- Decline in academic performance
- Written or verbal statements preoccupied with theme of death or that convey intent to harm self or others
- Fresh cuts, scratches or other wounds
- Withdrawal from activities and friends
- Statements of hopelessness such as, “I hate this life” or “Everyone is better off without me”

“I heard you saying that (the world would probably be better without you.) I’m concerned about you. Are you having thoughts of taking your life?”

- Express concern and care
- Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming
- Always take suicidal statements, thoughts or behaviors very seriously. If you suspect a student may be suicidal, seek immediate consultation
- If possible, ask directly about their feelings and plans
- Call Public Safety (651) 962-5555 if there is a threat to the student’s safety or the safety of others

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**Advice and consultation:**

\*Counseling & Psychological Services  
(651) 962-6750

\*Dean of Students Office  
(651) 962-6050

• Dean of Students Office  
(651) 962-6050

### Misconduct, inappropriate behavior and classroom disruption

- Disruptive Conduct: Inappropriate outbursts or persistent interruptions, continued arguing beyond the scope of academic debate, use of threats
- Disorderly Conduct: Throwing items, refusing to leave, preventing others from leaving, showing or stating the presence of a weapon
- Disorderly conduct and threatening behaviors require immediate action

“When you were (yelling), I noticed that it upset other students. It’s important to talk to your classmates respectfully. Is this something you can commit to?”

- Express concern and care
- Explain the impact of student’s behavior on the group or class
- Outline your expectations and help student explore options and alternatives

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### Crime victimization, hazing

- Appears fearful, anxious, nervous or angry
- Withdrawal from activities and friends
- Visible injuries or bruises
- Cuts, brands, or scars with a distinct pattern
- Unusual absence of or damage to personal items such as laptop, cellphone, etc.

“I’m sorry that happened, but I’m glad you’re safe now.” “Thank you for trusting me enough to tell me.”

- Express concern and care
- Remain calm. Showing outrage may cause a student to shut down
- Do not interpret student’s emotions as evidence of a crime
- Listen to and believe student’s responses
- Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming

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(651) 962-5555

**Advice and consultation:**

\*Health Services  
(651) 962-6750

\*Counseling & Psychological Services  
(651) 962-6750

\*Dean of Students Office  
(651) 962-6050

• Dean of Students Office  
(651) 962-6050

• Public Safety  
(651) 962-5100

### Actual or suspected medical issues (chronic illness, eating disorders, etc.)

- Frequent or extended absences
- Fatigue or dizziness
- Noticeable weight loss or gain
- Hair loss; pale or gray skin tone
- Unusual or secretive eating habits; obsession with the fat/caloric content of food
- Use of self-disparaging terms (fat, gross, ugly, etc.)

“I noticed that you (look really tired, or that you’ve been missing a lot of classes) lately. Have you been feeling okay?”

- Express concern and care
- Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming
- Listen to and believe student’s responses
- Recommend (or, if necessary, insist upon) medical intervention

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## RECOGNIZE

## RESPOND

## REFER

## REPORT

### Bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, cyberstalking

- Internet flaming, trolling, name-calling or harassment
- Communications that continue after being told to stop
- Threatening to release private information/photos
- Verbal abuse, innuendo of a sexual nature, unwanted sexual flirtations
- Demand for sexual favors by peer or supervisor accompanied by implied or overt threat concerning an individual's academic status or employment
- Display of sexually suggestive pictures or cartoons in workspace, residence halls or online
- Continued jokes, language, epithets, gestures or remarks of a sexual nature

"I'm really sorry that happened to you and I'm glad you're safe now."

- Express concern and care
- Listen to and believe student's responses. Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming
- Identify resources for safety planning
- Encourage student to keep a log of bullying/harassing behavior; take and save screenshots of online harassment (Twitter, Facebook, etc.); save copies of all communications including texts, voicemails and pictures

**Urgent:** Public Safety  
(651) 962-5555

**Advice and consultation:**  
\*Dean of Students Office  
(651) 962-6050

\*Title IX Coordinator  
(651) 962-6882

• Dean of Students Office  
(651) 962-6050

• Public Safety  
(651) 962-5100

• Title IX Coordinator  
(651) 962-6882

### Violence/ harassment interpersonal/ sexual assault

- Appears fearful or unusually anxious about pleasing partner or others
- Apologizes/excuses partner/other's behavior
- Mentions partner/other's possessiveness, jealousy or violent behavior, but may laugh it off
- Visible injuries or bruises
- Frequent mishaps or injuries with illogical or no explanations
- Crying or leaving when sexual violence, domestic violence, stalking or child abuse is the topic

"You've been through something very frightening. I'm so sorry."

- Express concern and care
- Listen to and believe student's responses
- Remain calm
- Showing outrage may shut student down. Do not interpret student's emotions as evidence of assault or violence
- Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming
- Identify resources for safety planning
- Recommend (or, if necessary, insist upon) medical intervention

**Urgent:** Public Safety  
(651) 962-5555

**Advice and consultation:**  
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(651)962-6750

\*Health Services  
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### Alcohol or other drug abuse

- Intoxicated/high in class or at meetings/events
- Excessive sleepiness or hyper energy
- Decline in academic performance
- References to alcohol or drug use in conversations, papers, projects, etc.
- Deterioration in physical appearance (bloodshot eyes, dilated pupils, trembling hands, etc.)
- Unusual smells on breath, body or clothes

"I often hear you talking about drinking and I'm concerned that alcohol might be impacting your academic performance."

- Express concern and care
- Give an example of a time that the student's behavior has worried you
- Listen to and believe student's responses
- Be supportive and encouraging if the student agrees to get help
- Offer to help the student make an appointment with Counseling and Psychological Services for alcohol screening and intervention

**Urgent:** Public Safety  
(651) 962-5555

**Advice and consultation:**  
\*Counseling and Psychological Services  
(651)962-6750

\*Health Services  
(651)962-6750

• Dean of Students Office  
(651) 962-6050

### Family or personal tragedy, loss, or crisis (illness or death of family member, job loss, foreclosure, natural disaster, divorce or break-up, legal difficulties, etc.)

- Frequent or extended absences
- Decline in academic performance
- Mentions relationship, financial or other challenges
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Exhaustion/fatigue
- Excessive worry, sleeping/eating problems

"That sounds like a really difficult situation. Are you meeting with anyone in the counseling center?"

- Express concern and care
- Avoid criticizing, sounding judgmental, minimizing or blaming
- Listen to and believe student's responses
- Be supportive and encouraging if the student agrees to get help

**Advice and consultation:**  
\*Counseling and Psychological Services  
(651) 962-6750

\*Dean of Students Office  
(651) 962-6050

• Dean of Students Office  
(651) 962-6050

• Department Academic Dean

**"If you see something, say something"**

# Maintaining Compliance with State and Federal Laws and University Policies

## Academic Integrity Policy

University of St. Thomas' Academic Integrity Policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate students participating in academic classes, programs and research projects offered by the university, including online and distance learning. For more information, training and support, contact Office of Academic Affairs at (651) 962-6717.

## University Alcohol and Drug Policies

Students are responsible for adhering to the university's alcohol and other drug policies, which conform to state and federal laws and enhance the health, safety and educational interests of our community. For more information, training and support, contact the Dean of Students Office at (651) 962-6050.

## Weapons Policy

The University of St. Thomas is committed to providing a safe and secure learning, working and living environment. This policy prohibits the possession and use of weapons on campus and in connection with St. Thomas employment. This policy applies to all St. Thomas students, employees (faculty, staff and student workers), contractors, volunteers, visitors and licensees. For more information, training and support, contact the Department of Public Safety at (651) 962-5100.

## Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy

The University of St. Thomas continually strives to meet the highest standards of respect and civility that are both implicit and explicit in its vision, mission and convictions. It is the university's goal that no member of the university community shall be subject to any physical or verbal harassment, abuse or violence based on the individual's race, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin, religion or physical or mental disability. The value placed upon human dignity and diversity should be interpreted as augmenting, not infringing upon "freedom of expression" or "academic freedom." As a result, the university has adopted a policy designed to investigate and resolve such claims in a direct and thorough manner while respecting the rights of all parties involved. For more information, training and support, contact the Office for Diversity and Inclusion at (651) 962-5200. Report Bias Incidents online: [stthomas.edu/deanofstudents/bias-reporting/](http://stthomas.edu/deanofstudents/bias-reporting/).

## Student Leave of Absence Policy

This policy is intended to support students who might benefit from pausing their education. Moreover, this policy provides the university with the ability to protect the safety and well-being of the community by removing students whose behaviors indicate a risk to themselves or the community. This policy does not replace existing academic performance, student conduct, or dismissal policies maintained by academic units or the Dean of Students Office. For more information, training and support, contact the Dean of Students Office at (651) 962-6050.

## Title IX

Subject to exceptions that apply to counselors, clinicians or, in limited circumstances, clergy, any St. Thomas employee who becomes aware of a potential incident of sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating or domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, or other assault or harassment involving a student at the University of St. Thomas - either as alleged victim or perpetrator - on or off campus must promptly report the matter to an "Official with Authority": generally, the Title IX Coordinator. Online reporting and information about what University employees are Officials with Authority is available at [stthomas.edu/title-ix](http://stthomas.edu/title-ix). The person who becomes aware of the incident and is making the report should not investigate the matter. The Title IX Coordinator or designee will address the concern in accordance with University policies and processes and as appropriate under the circumstances. For details see [stthomas.edu/title-ix](http://stthomas.edu/title-ix). For more information, training and support, contact the Title IX Coordinator at (651) 962-6882 or [title-ix@stthomas.edu](mailto:title-ix@stthomas.edu).

## Clery Act

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act is the federal law originally known as the Campus Security Act that requires universities to disclose information about crime on and around their campuses. The law is tied to federal financial aid program funding and is enforced by the United States Department of Education. A copy of St. Thomas' annual security report is available at [stthomas.edu/public-safety/crime-reporting/security-authority](http://stthomas.edu/public-safety/crime-reporting/security-authority). It includes campus security policies, crime statistics for the previous three years, daily crime logs and timely missing student warnings. For more information, training and support, contact UST Public Safety at (651) 962-5100.

## Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that allows present and former students access to their educational records and provides basic privacy protection. Educational records are defined as those directly related to a student and maintained by an educational agency or institution. FERPA permits disclosure of personal identifiable information from a student's educational record to parents, police or others to protect the health and safety of the student or other individuals. Information can be shared with University personnel when there is a specific need to know. Observations of a student's conduct or statements made by a student are not part of a student's educational record and should be appropriately shared. For more information, training and support, contact the Dean of Students Office at (651) 962-6050 or the University Registrar at (651) 962-6700.

## ACTIVE SHOOTER PROTOCOL



**RUN**

- Attempt to escape.
- Leave your belongings.
- Keep your hands visible



**HIDE**

- If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide outside of the shooter's view.
- Lock and blockade doors.
- Silence phones or other noise makers.



**FIGHT**

- Fight as a last resort, if your life is in danger.
- Attempt to incapacitate the active shooter.
- Yell, act aggressively, throw items or improvise with possible weapons.

University of St. Thomas Public Safety Emergency Line 651-962-5555

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University policies, including student policies, can be found at [www.stthomas.edu/policies](http://www.stthomas.edu/policies).