



RESPONDING TO STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

210 Elliott University Center
Monday–Friday
8:00 am–5:00 pm
deanofstudents.uncg.edu
336.334.5514
dossaf@uncg.edu



UNC GREENSBORO
Division of Student Affairs
Dean of Students



[instagram.com/uncgdos](https://www.instagram.com/uncgdos)

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Life Threatening Situation

UNCG Police (24 hours) 336.334.4444
UNCG Police (Text) **336.447.3898**

Non-Emergency

UNCG Police (24 hours) 336.334.5963
Dean of Students Office 336.334.5514

Classroom Management Concerns

Undergraduate Teaching &
Learning Commons 336.334.5980

Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom Policy

Contact Dept. Chair or Academic Dean
Dean of Students Office 336.334.5514

Student Code of Conduct or Academic Integrity Policy

Office of Student Rights
& Responsibilities 336.334.4640

Residence Life Resource

Housing & Residence Life ... 336.334.5636

Health & Mental Health Resources

Counseling & Psychological
Services 336.334.5874
Student Health Services 336.334.5340
Campus Violence Response
Center 336.334.9839
Guilford County Behavioral
Health Center (24 hours) 336.890.2700
Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
988lifeline.org/chat ... or ... Call/Text 988

Administrative Resources

Dean of Students Office
(Multiple Student Issues) 336.334.5514
Graduate School 336.334.5596
International Programs
Center 336.334.5404

RESPONDING TO STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Behavior is considered disruptive when it is not conducive to the teaching and learning process in the classroom or the residential community, and interferes with the functions and services of the University. These behaviors are usually a violation of the Student Code of Conduct or the Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom Policy.

STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Students may experience a great deal of stress during the course of their academic experience. Some students find the various pressures of life unmanageable or unbearable. You may be the first person in position to help the student. Take the initiative to reach out to the student, say something, and call for assistance.

Behaviors that have an underlying mental health component can include threatening to harm self or others, delusional thinking, experiencing hallucinations, and/or becoming extremely withdrawn or depressed. Mental health issues can alter the content of the student’s communication.

ASSISTING STUDENTS BEFORE INCIDENTS

	DISRUPTIVE STUDENT	STUDENT IN EMOTIONAL DISTRESS
Goals	Promote civil behavior in classrooms, residence halls, and university activities. Assist faculty and staff in handling student issues.	Promote educational wellness, life skills education, and help-seeking behaviors, as well as information about campus resources.
Be Proactive	Know campus resources and the referral process; contact the Dean of Students Office at 336.334.5514 or visit them on the web at deanofstudents.uncg.edu	Contact the Counseling & Psychological Services or Spartan Well-Being for information on programs promoting emotional wellness, life skills development, help-seeking behaviors and other campus resources.
Help the Student	Inform the student of expectations of appropriate engagement in the classroom or educational activity, the University’s standards of student conduct, and Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom Policy.	Refer to the Dean of Students Office or Counseling & Psychological Services.
Accountability	All students are accountable for their actions. UNCG does not tolerate violent, dangerous, threatening, harassing or disruptive behavior that interferes with the educational mission or safety of the University community.	Students are accountable for taking care of their overall well-being and taking the necessary steps to recognize when they need additional support. UNCG provides free services to student that can guide them in seeking assistance and promoting their mental health.
How to Request Assistance	Contact the Academic Department Head/Chair, UNCG Police, Dean of Students Office, Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, or Housing & Residence Life Staff Member. <i>See front cover of this Quick Reference Guide for contact Information.</i>	

INTERVENING WITH A STUDENT INCIDENT

	DISRUPTIVE STUDENT	STUDENT IN EMOTIONAL DISTRESS
Assess	What are the disruptive behavior issues? What are the potential threats or impacts to educational mission?	What behaviors are indicating emotional distress? What is the reason for concerns for the well-being of that student?
How to Identify	Behavior is considered disruptive when it is not conducive to the teaching and learning process in the classroom or the residential community, and interferes with the functions and services of the University.	Behaviors that have an underlying mental health component can include threatening to harm self or others, delusional thinking, experiencing hallucinations, and/or becoming extremely withdrawn or depressed.
Make a Referral	Listen sensitively to the student, document specific behaviors and the impacts of the behaviors. Helpful documentation includes, but is not limited to, frequency, dates, quotes, and information about when and how expectations were provided to the student. Reiterate University standards of conduct. Review the Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom Policy at: sa.uncg.edu/handbook/policies	Listen sensitively to the student. Ask the student “Are you thinking about harming yourself?” If the student’s response is “yes”, contact the Counseling & Psychological Services or if you are concerned about the safety of the student or others call UNCG Police 336.334.4444. If the student’s response is “no”, encourage the student to speak with someone in Counseling & Psychological Services. Follow up with the student later to assess the situation. After business hours (8AM–5PM), contact UNCG Police.
Safety	Know your physical environment and make provisions for your safety and that of others. If at any time you are concerned for someone's health or safety, contact UNCG PD at 336.334.4444	
Consultation	See front cover of this Quick Reference Guide for list of available resources.	Counseling & Psychological Services: 336.334.5874 Dean of Students Office: 336.334.5514 or dossaf@uncg.edu

ASSISTING AFTER AN INCIDENT

	DISRUPTIVE STUDENT	STUDENT IN EMOTIONAL DISTRESS	STUDENT DEATH
Goals	Address the issues surrounding the behavior and avoiding reoccurrence.	Assist with re-entry into the academic and residential community, and prevent similar student crises in the future.	Coordinate response and provide support to family, friends, and the University community in coping with the loss of the student.
Review Actions	The Counseling & Psychological Services or the Dean of Students Office can provide feedback regarding response to student’s behavior and intervention.		The Counseling & Psychological Services can provide community support. The Dean of Students Office can coordinate support efforts with other University departments.
Support	Have a follow-up conversation with the student and refer to appropriate resources.	The Dean of Students Office will reach out to the student to provide support and offer services. Depending on the student’s behavior, a self-care plan may be developed between the student, Counseling and Psychological Services, and Dean of Students Office to prevent and/or handle reoccurrence.	Contact the Counseling & Psychological Services and request that a counselor meet with the involved parties who are impacted by the student’s death.
Media	Consult with University Communications at 336.334.5371 if contacted by the media.		

RESPONDING TO STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Be alert to signs of Distress

Academic Indicators

- Deterioration in quality of work
- Missed assignments
- Repeated absences
- Essays or creative works that indicate extreme hopelessness, social isolation, rage, fear, or despair.

Emotional Indicators

- Direct statements indicating distress
- Unprovoked anger
- Sudden changes in personality
- Excessive dependency
- Tearfulness

Physical Indicators

- Deterioration in physical appearance
- Lack of personal hygiene
- Excessive fatigue
- Visible changes in weight
- Coming to class bleary-eyed, hung over or smelling of alcohol or other drugs

Safety Risk Indicators

- Any written or verbal statement which has a sense of finality or a suicidal tone to it
- Essays or papers which focus on despair, suicide, or death
- Statements to the effect that they are "going away for a long time"
- Giving away prized possessions
- Self-injurious or self-destructive behaviors

Steps for Assisting a Student in Distress

1. **Reach out:** Meet privately with the student in distress if you feel comfortable doing so. If necessary, call for guidance on how best to handle the situation: Dean of Students Office (336.334.5514), Counseling & Psychological Services (336.334.5874) or the University Police (336.334.5963).
2. **Build rapport:** Listen attentively and repeat what they tell you.
3. **Ask questions:** Use direct and simple language.
4. **Empathize:** Express care and concern. Specifically point out signs you've observed.
5. **Take notes:** Document your conversation with the student for future reference.
6. **Problem solving:** Talk to the student about seeing an appropriate professional on campus.
7. **Help student create action plan:** Try to come to an agreement about help seeking behavior and resources.
8. **Contact a resource:** Email the Dean of Students Office so we can also reach out as needed and track patterns of concern (dossaf@uncg.edu). If safety risk indicators are present do not send an email, call immediately. If after hours, contact the University Police.
9. **Follow up:** Reach back out to the student soon after to see how they are doing.

Frequently Asked Questions

When should I call the police?

Err on the side of caution. Call the University Police whenever you believe there is any threat of violence, a student is a risk to self or others, or other unlawful behavior. Any threat of violence should be taken seriously.

How do I respond when classroom disruption occurs?

Faculty members have broad authority to manage the classroom environment. Faculty should address disruptive behavior immediately. Students may be asked to leave the classroom and must do so. Faculty may implement the *Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom Policy* as needed.

What if a disruptive student claims the behavior is a result of a disability?

The faculty member should consult with the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (336.334.5540). Students who have a disability may only qualify for classroom accommodations after registering with that office. Students with or without disabilities must adhere to reasonable behavioral standards.

Should I act immediately or wait for a pattern of misbehavior to occur?

The classroom is a learning setting and as such, behavior should be addressed immediately so that the student can learn expectations for collegiate classroom behavior. Generally, professors who state reasonable expectations early, and enforce them consistently, help students avoid the harsher consequences that flow from more serious infractions later.

What can I do to encourage appropriate behavior in the classroom?

Include in your course-level information and policy about the expectations of behavior. Discuss the concept on the first day of class. Consider having some way to start each class with something that earns students points—example: a quiz—that will encourage timeliness. Address inappropriate behavior immediately and respectfully.

