

# Supporting Students in Distress

## Are you concerned about the well-being or safety of a student? Have you observed student behaviors that caused concern or made you feel unsafe?

If you see something, say something. The vigilance of all community members is critical in keeping the campus safe. We are unable to mitigate a situation until we are aware of it. The university expects all members of our community to act quickly and responsibly if they hear or see something that is out of the ordinary. It is important to report any concerns, even if they seem minor. Do not assume someone else will call.

Most students will experience sadness, overwhelming stress, and/or crisis during their college years. These experiences will range in severity but can affect a student's wellbeing and success at Oklahoma State. You may interact with students who need assistance. Being aware of indicators of distress and resources on campus can help in handling these situations. You play an important role at Oklahoma State University in providing resources to support student success.

Refer students by completing a Care Report online at [ssc.okstate.edu/report](https://ssc.okstate.edu/report) or call Student Support and Conduct at **405.744.5470**.

## Below are indicators that will help you identify a student of concern. Pay attention to persistent behaviors, sudden changes, and the duration of the signs.

### ACADEMIC

- Sudden decline in quality of course work and/or grades
- Lack of organization skills
- Multiple requests for extensions on assignments
- Overly demanding of faculty/staff's time and attention
- Unusual content in writings or presentations
- Your conversations tend to be more about personal topics rather than academic

### PHYSICAL

- Significant changes in physical appearance — grooming, hygiene, weight loss/gain
- Excessive loss of sleep or fatigue
- Consistent intoxication, hangovers, or the scent of alcohol
- Seems to be disoriented or "out of it" often
- Disconnected or slurred speech
- Strange behavior that is out of context
- Delusions or paranoia

### PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Concern from peers
- Extreme emotional response to events
- Excessive crying or panicked reactions
- Unusual irritability
- Heightened apathy towards things they normally cherish or look forward to
- Disclosure of personal issues — family or financial issues, grief, suicidal ideation

### SAFETY RISK

- Physical violence towards others — shoving, grabbing, assault, use of weapons
- Implying or making direct threat to harm self or others
- Themes of hopelessness, rage, worthlessness, despair, suicidal ideation, etc. found within academic assignments
- Stalking or harassing others
- Communicating threats others or self

**Stay Safe** | Call police or 911 if there is an imminent danger to the student, you, or anyone else.

**Stay Calm** | Take a few deep breaths to calm yourself. Use a calm voice when talking and asking questions.

**Actively Listen** | Make eye contact and give your full attention. Restate what the student says to make sure you understand what is causing the distress and/or what they are asking for help with.

**Ask Directly** | Don't be afraid to directly ask the student if they are having thoughts of harming themselves or others (by asking, you are not instilling the thought).

**Use OARS to help an individual who may be struggling.**

- **Open-Ended Questions** — Ask questions that require a complete answer.
- **Affirmations** — Acknowledge the individual's distress without judgment
- **Reflective Listening** — Understand what an individual says and feels and then relay this back to them.
- **Summarize** — Validate the individual for seeking help. Determine if you can provide assistance at that time and encourage them to connect with support resources on campus.

## Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence



**All forms of sexual violence should be reported to the University, no matter the severity.**

Oklahoma State University's primary concern is safety. The University encourages those impacted by sexual violence to talk to someone about what happened so they can receive support and the University can respond appropriately.

Follow these three simple steps to best support a student who discloses an incident of sexual violence. If a crime is currently ongoing or there is an emergency, **call 911**.

**1. Support** | If an individual discloses an incident of sexual violence to you, first provide a supportive response. Always make it apparent to the student that you believe them and are available for support.

**2. Refer** | There are several campus and community resources available to victims of crimes. Refer the student to [1is2many.okstate.edu](http://1is2many.okstate.edu) to review support resources. Please inform the individual about their option to:

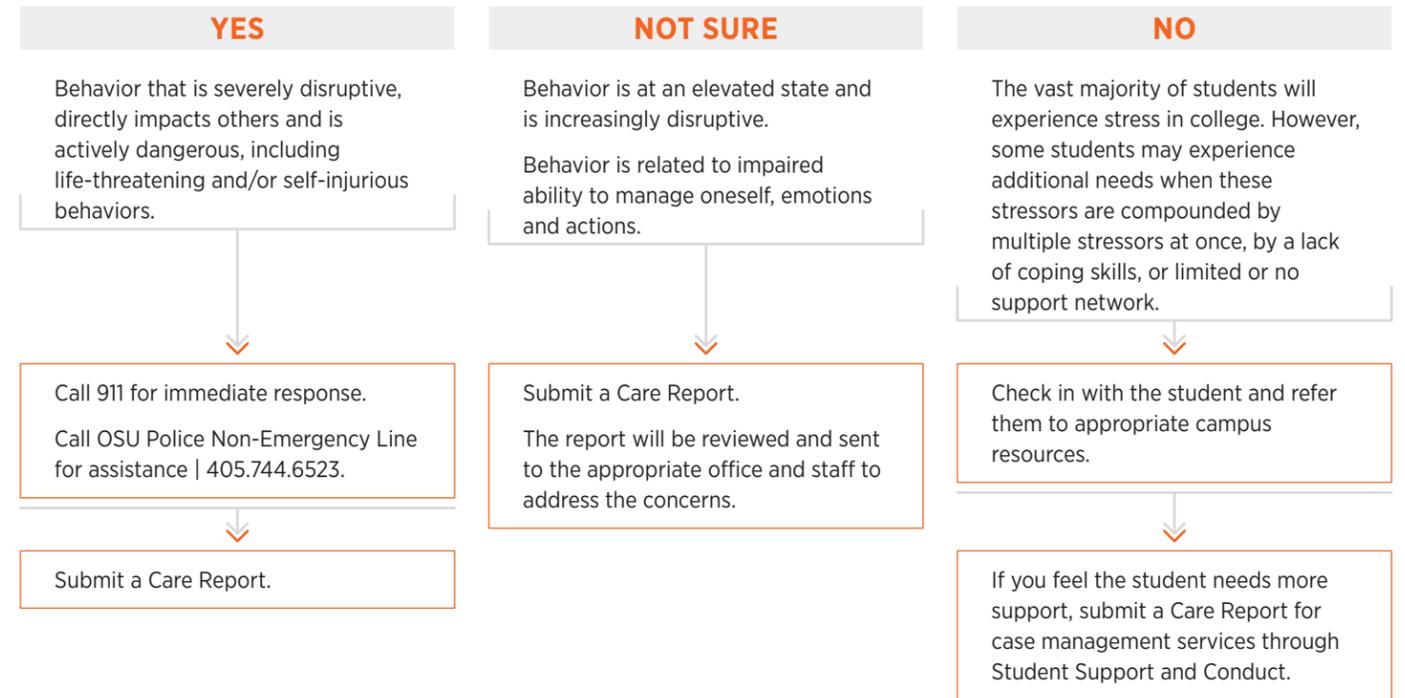
- **Report directly to law enforcement themselves.** You do not need to convince the person reporting the incident to you to speak to the police if they are unwilling to do so.
- **Submit a report to the university.** Students can submit a complaint alleging a policy violation against another student or an employee. Student Support and Conduct can assist in filing a complainant also available online [ssc.okstate.edu/report](http://ssc.okstate.edu/report).
- **Seek supportive measures from Student Support and Conduct.** Supportive measures include living arrangements, academic arrangements, emergency protective orders, etc.
- **Contact an OSU Victim Advocate.** A Victim Advocate can talk with an individual about resources on campus as well as the different processes an individual may or may not want to consider. Victim Advocates are confidential, meaning they cannot disclose information shared with them to anyone. Victim Advocates can be contacted at **405-564-2129** for more information and resources.

**3. Report** | When an incident of sexual violence is reported to any employee, the employee is strongly encouraged, if not required, to report the incident. Employee should report disclosures involving students to Student Support and Conduct online at [ssc.okstate.edu/report](http://ssc.okstate.edu/report) or call **405-744-5470**. Concerns involving employees should be directed to Equal Opportunity Office at **405-744-9153**.

When reporting to Student Support and Conduct or Equal Opportunity Office, employees are required to provide both the victim and alleged individual's names and details of what you know. The university is required to take immediate and appropriate steps to investigate what occurred and take prompt and effective action to: end the harassment, prevent any recurrence, and remedy the effects.

**Do not investigate.** You do not have to prove what happened or who was at fault, the appropriate and appointed individuals will investigate. In addition, do not try to apprehend the alleged individual of a crime.

## Is Immediate Assistance Needed?



### Care Report

**Submitting a Care Report allows university administrators to address any concerns and support student success.** Submit a report at [ssc.okstate.edu/report](http://ssc.okstate.edu/report) or call **405-744-5470**.

Reports will be reviewed and assigned to the Care Team, Behavioral Consultation Team, or case management. A representative will reach out to the person of concern as appropriate. To respect the student's privacy rights, the reporter will typically not be informed of the interactions with the person of concern.

#### BEHAVIORAL CONSULTATION TEAM

The Behavioral Consultation Team (BCT) is a specially trained group of professional staff members from several university departments with mental health, student development, law enforcement, academic, administrative, and legal expertise. The team investigates and evaluates threats and other concerning behaviors, implements strategies for managing individuals that may pose a threat of harm. The team's goal is to work with all parties involved to affect a safe campus environment.

#### CARE TEAM

The focus of the Care Team is to take a proactive approach when identifying students who are under distress and provide them with resources, interventions (early), and referral agencies on campus or in the community. The role of this team is to help students who may be in distress or experiencing challenging or difficult life circumstances.

#### CASE MANAGEMENT

Students can be referred for case management by faculty, staff, family, or other students when they have a concern regarding a student's welfare. Students can also self-refer to access support and assistance. Through individualized consultation, case management provides assessment, intervention, and coordination of services to support students navigating challenging or unexpected issues that impact their well-being and academic success. Referrals can be made by completing a **Care Report**.

## Additional Resources for Support

**University Counseling Services (UCS)** provides group, grief, substance abuse, and crisis counseling. The Student Counseling Center also offers a walk-in clinic and psychiatric referrals.  
[ucs.okstate.edu](http://ucs.okstate.edu) • 405.744.5458

**Student Assistance by Mercy (SAM)** has licensed counselors available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to respond to crises, and provide referrals and consultations.  
855.225.2SAM (2726)

**Therapy Assistance Online (TAO)** is a free online library of interactive programs to learn life skills and to help you bounce back from disappointments and stumbling blocks in life.  
[ucs.okstate.edu/scc/tao](http://ucs.okstate.edu/scc/tao)

**Student Support and Conduct (SSC)** houses staff trained in supporting students who may be experiencing mental health struggles, sexual violence, college stressors, and crisis. Student Support and Conduct enforces the Student Code of Conduct for when student behavior falls outside of the University's expectations. Student Support and Conduct receives the Care reports and leads the Behavioral Consultation and Care Teams.  
[ssc.okstate.edu](http://ssc.okstate.edu) • 405.744.5470

**University Health Services (UHS)** is an acute care facility that provides a wide variety of services including outpatient medical care, nutritional counseling, a full retail pharmacy, women's clinic, as well as mental health and psychiatry services made possible by partnerships with OSU's School of Community Health Sciences, Counseling and Counseling Psychology and Grand Lake Mental Health.  
[uhs.okstate.edu](http://uhs.okstate.edu) • 405.744.7665

**Student Accessibility Services** offers academic support services to students with disabilities.  
[accessibility.okstate.edu](http://accessibility.okstate.edu) • 405.744.7116

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** is available to OSU employees provides confidential support, resources, and information for personal and work-life issues.  
[hr.okstate.edu/benefits/hrEAP](http://hr.okstate.edu/benefits/hrEAP) • 405.744.5449

**WHEN IN DOUBT, REPORT!**

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**STUDENT SUPPORT  
AND CONDUCT**