

Levels of Distress

MILD DISTRESS

Students in mild distress may exhibit behaviors that do not disrupt others but may indicate something is wrong and assistance is needed.

Behaviors may include:

- Serious grade problems or a change from consistently passing grades to unaccountably poor performance.
- Excessive absences, especially if student has previously demonstrated consistent attendance.
- Unusual or markedly changed patterns of interaction, i.e. avoidance of participation, excessive anxiety when called upon, domination of discussions, etc.
- Other characteristics that suggest the student is having trouble managing stress successfully (i.e. a depressed, lethargic mood; very rapid speech; swollen, red eyes; marked change in personal dress and hygiene; falling asleep during class).

MODERATE DISTRESS

Students in moderate distress may exhibit behaviors that indicate significant emotional distress. They may also be reluctant or unable to acknowledge a need for help.

- Repeated requests for special consideration, such as deadline extensions, especially if the student appears uncomfortable or highly emotional while disclosing the circumstances prompting the request.
- New or repeated behavior which pushes the limits and interferes with effective management of the environment.
- Unusual or exaggerated emotional response that is disproportionate to the situation.

Providing assistance to a student experiencing **mild or moderate distress** can happen in the following ways:

- Deal directly with the behavior/problem according to the tenant lease.
- Listen. Allow the student to speak freely about their situation and identify an appropriate resolution.
- Consult with the Student Assistance staff in the ISU Dean of Students Office.
- Refer the student directly or anonymously.
- Provide information on Student Assistance to the student and encourage them to follow-up.

SEVERE DISTRESS

When a student expresses a direct threat to themselves or others, or acts in a bizarre, highly irrational or disruptive way, call 911 or the Ames Police at 515-239-5133.

Students in severe distress exhibit behaviors signifying crisis and necessitate emergency care. Examples include:

- Highly disruptive behavior (hostility, aggression, violence, etc.)
- Inability to communicate clearly (garbled, slurred speech; unconnected, disjointed or rambling thoughts)
- Loss of contact with reality (seeing or hearing things which others cannot see or hear; beliefs or actions greatly at odds with reality or probability).
- Stalking behaviors.
- Inappropriate communications (including threatening letters, e-mail messages, harassment).
- Overtly suicidal thoughts.
- Threats to harm others.

Providing assistance to a student experiencing severe distress can happen in the following ways:

- Remain calm and know who to call for help.
- Find someone to stay with the student while calls to the appropriate resources are made.