DEAN OF STUDENTS

EIU COUNSELING CLINIC

STUDENT SUCCESS

ASSISTING STUDENTS IN NEED

HANDBOOK FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

Throughout the college experience, students develop independence by navigating challenging, stressful, and sometimes overwhelming adversity.

This handbook is a guide to assisting students who may be in distress.

EIU

Why This Guide Matters

SUPPORTING STUDENTS STARTS WITH CONNECTION

College can be a time of growth, excitement, and opportunity , but it can also be a time of overwhelming stress, emotional difficulty, crisis, and uncertainty. Students may face challenges related to mental health, academic pressure, relationships, financial strain, grief, identity development, trauma, substance use, family concerns, or personal crises that impact their well-being and success.

YOU MAY BE THE BE FIRST TO NOTICE

Faculty and staff are often among the first to recognize when a student is struggling. Changes in attendance, behavior, mood, communication, or classroom functioning may signal that a student needs support.

Often, students who are struggling will first share concerns with a trusted faculty or staff member or show signs of distress long before they seek professional help.

You are not expected to be a counselor or solve the problem, but you can play an important role in noticing concerns, responding with care, and helping students connect with appropriate resources.

A caring conversation, a thoughtful check-in, or connecting a student with support can significantly impact a student's well-being, safety, persistence, and academic success.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This handbook was created to help faculty and staff:

- Recognize signs of distress, concern, or crisis
- Respond to students with compassion and confidence
- Navigate difficult or uncomfortable conversations
- Differentiate between urgent and non-urgent concerns
- Respond to disruptive, threatening, or concerning behavior
- Connect students to appropriate campus and community resources
- Understand when and how to seek additional support

You **are not** expected to:

- Diagnose mental health conditions
- Solve a student's problems
- Provide therapy
- handle dangerous situations alone

You are **encouraged** to:

- Notice changes or concern
- Reach out and express care
- Listen without Judgment
- Seek consultation when unsure
- Refer students to support
- Act Immediately when safety is at risk

Students may not remember every lecture, but they often remember the person who noticed, cared, and helped them feel supported.

Assisting Students in Need Guide for Faculty and Staff

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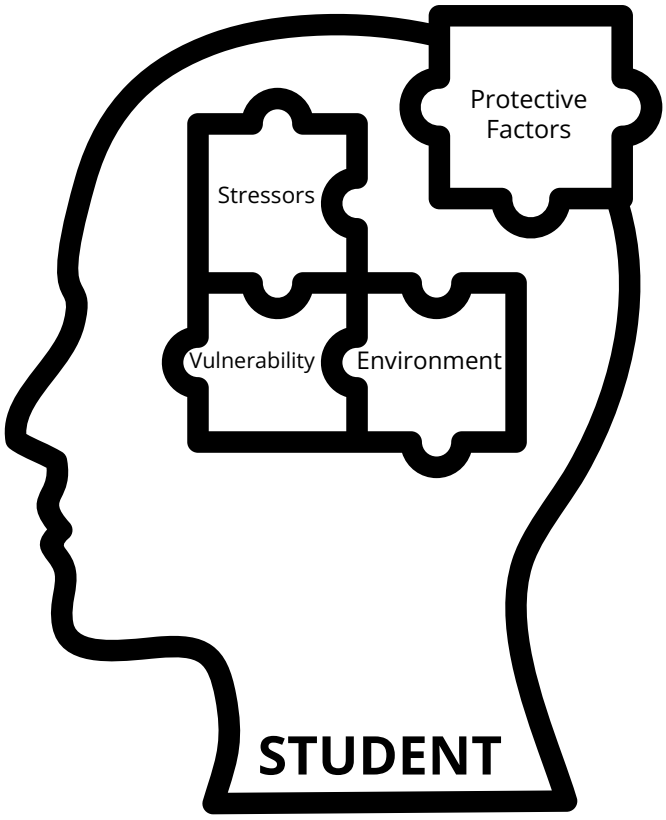
Student Success and Wellness is Everyone's Responsibility

Everyone Plays a Role:

Professors
Coaches
Staff
UPD
Residence Life
Administration
Peers

Early Support can Help:
Prevent concerns from escalating into crisis
Reduce barriers to help-seeking
Improve student well-being behavior
Increase feelings of connection and belonging
Support academic success and retention
Encourage use of campus resources



Your Role is to...

- Notice changes
- Trust your instincts
- Communicate concerns to student
- Support student without trying to "fix" problem
- Communicate concerns to supervisor (if needed)
- Connect student to support
- Follow reporting processes
- Act quickly if there is an immediate safety concern

You do not need to wait until a student is in obvious crisis to check in or refer them for support. Changes in behavior, mood, attendance, communication, or functioning may indicate that a student could benefit from connection and resources.

Notice Early. Respond with Care. Connect to Support.

Student in Distress: What Do I Do? (Quick Reference)

You notice a student in distress or displaying concerning behavior

WHEN IN DOUBT:

Pause and ask yourself: *"Am I concerned about this students' or other students' well-being or safety?"*

Is there an IMMEDIATE safety concern, weapon, medical emergency, violent behavior, or imminent threat to self/others?

No

Is the student expressing suicidal thoughts, self harm, or passive thoughts of harming others?

No

Refer the student to the Counseling Clinic, Dean of Students, or other appropriate department using the referral guide.

Yes

Call 911 Immediately

Following speaking with the police fill out an incident report on Dean of Students Website

Stay nearby if you are safe and do not leave student alone

Yes

Walk student to the Counseling Clinic or call while the student is present. Remain with the student until they are safe and connected with support.

After hours, have student call 988.

Minor concern or unsure what to do?

Consult Counseling Clinic or Dean of Students Office for guidance

Situation	Action
Immediate danger	Call 911 / Police
Suicidal concern	Stay with student + Walk to Counseling/Call 988 for after hours
Threatening classroom behavior	Follow threatening behavior on page 12-15 Call 911 if safety is a concern Submit incident report to Dean of Students
Distressed but safe and other mental health concerns	Refer and support using the referral guides in this handbook
Unsure	Consult Counseling / Dean of Students

Supporting Students by Level of Concern

Level of Concern	Possible Signs & Symptoms	What To Do	Who To Refer To
LOW / MODERATE CONCERN (Concerning but not urgent)	Mild anxiety, stress, homesickness, academic struggles, occasional tearfulness, social withdrawal, changes in mood, attendance concerns, relationship stress, sleep concerns, mild depression, difficulty concentrating, grief, increased irritability, possible eating disorder behavior	Reach out and check in. Speak privately and express concern. Use supportive language: "I've noticed you seem overwhelmed lately." Normalize support-seeking. Encourage resources and follow up.	Counseling Clinic (voluntary support) Dean of Students (support Services) Student Success Center (Academic Support)
MODERATE / ELEVATED CONCERN (Student appears significantly distressed or risk is present but not imminent)	Severe depression, statements like "I can't do this anymore," hopelessness, major functional decline, concerning behavioral changes, escalating substance use, passive suicidal thoughts ("I wish I could disappear"), self-harm concerns, trauma disclosure, interpersonal violence concerns	Do not leave the student unsupported. Speak privately. Ask direct, caring questions about safety. Consult Counseling Services the same day. If possible, walk the student to counseling or assist with immediate connection. Submit incident report to Dean of Students After hours, call 988 and alert Counseling Clinic.	Counseling Clinic (same day referral) Dean of Students Title IX (for interpersonal violence/sexual misconduct) Dean of Students
SEVERE CONCERN / IMMINENT RISK (Immediate danger to self or others)	Unable to guarantee safety, homicidal threats, psychosis, extreme disorientation, inability to care for self, threats of violence, possession of weapon, severe intoxication/overdose, medical emergency, acute manic behavior, statements such as "I'm going to kill myself today" or "I'm going to hurt someone."	Act immediately. Do NOT leave the student alone. Call 911 immediately. If safe, remain with the student until help arrives. Contact Counseling Services and Dean of Students after emergency response is initiated. Submit incident report.	911 / Emergency Services - Campus Police/Public Safety Counseling Clinic (crisis consultation) Dean of Students

Understanding Student Distress

Students experience stress and challenges in many different ways. While some students openly express when they are struggling, others may show distress through changes in behavior, communication, academic performance, appearance, or emotional functioning.

Student distress exists on a continuum. Some students may be experiencing temporary stress related to exams, relationships, homesickness, or life transitions, while others may be struggling with more serious concerns such as depression, anxiety, trauma, substance use, grief, food or housing insecurity, suicidal thoughts, or a mental health crisis.

No single behavior automatically indicates a serious concern. However, patterns of change, multiple warning signs, increasing severity, or behaviors that feel unusual for a student may signal that additional support is needed.

Faculty and staff are not expected to diagnose or determine exactly what is wrong. Instead, the goal is to notice concerning changes, respond with care, and determine whether support or referral may be helpful. Look for:

Frequency: Is this happening repeatedly or becoming more noticeable
Duration: Has the concern persisted over time
Severity: How significantly is the students functioning, behavior, or well-being impacted?
Changes from baseline: Does this seem different from the students usual behavior or presentation?

The following categories describe common indicators of student distress. Students may experience concerns in one area or multiple areas at the same time

ACADEMIC
Missing assignees
Major grade decline
Excessive absences
Disorganized communication
Bizarre content in writings or presentations
Multiple requests for extensions

BEHAVIORAL
Irritability
Withdrawal
Angry outbursts
concerning emails

PHYSICAL
hygiene changes
fatigue
appearing intoxicated or under the influence
rapid weight changes
Disoriented or "out of it"

PSYCHOLOGICAL
Anxiety
Tearfulness
Hopelessness
Overwhelm
Depression
Concern from peers
Unusual or disproportionate emotional response to events
Self-disclosure of personal distress (e.g., family or financial problems, grief, suicidal thoughts)

How to Talk to Students

You are not expected to solve the problem or provide counseling. Your role is to recognize concerns, create space for conversation, and help students access appropriate support. Students often remember when someone noticed, checked in, and cared.

NOTICE → ASK → LISTEN → SUPPORT → REFER

1. NOTICE

Begin by focusing on observable behaviors or changes rather than assumptions.

Examples:

"I've noticed you've missed several classes lately and wanted to check in."
"I noticed you seemed upset after class and wanted to see how you're doing."
"I've noticed some changes and wanted to check in."

Helpful Tips:

Be specific about what you observed
Speak privately when possible
Approach with care and curiosity

Avoid:

Making assumptions
Diagnosing behavior
Confrontational language

2. ASK

Open the conversation with supportive, nonjudgmental questions.

Examples:

"How have things been going lately?"
"You seem like you've been carrying a lot recently — how are you doing?"
"I wanted to check in because I'm concerned about you."

3. LISTEN

Sometimes the most helpful response is simply listening.

Helpful responses:

"I'm glad you told me."
"That sounds really difficult."
"Thank you for sharing this with me."

4. SUPPORT

Explore what may help the student feel supported.

Questions you might ask:

"What support would feel helpful right now?"
"Have you talked with anyone about this?"
"Would you be open to connecting with campus resources?"

5. REFER

When appropriate, connect students with resources.

Whenever possible, consider a warm handoff:

Help make the call
Walk the student to the office
Assist with next steps

Talking with Students: Helpful Tips & Things to Avoid

HELPFUL APPROACHES (DO)	THINGS TO AVOID (DON'T)
Speak privately when possible to reduce embarrassment or defensiveness.	Address sensitive concerns publicly or in front of classmates.
Lead with care and concern. Example: "I wanted to check in because I'm concerned about you."	Sound accusatory or disciplinary. Example: "What is going on with you?"
Focus on observable behavior. Example: "I've noticed you haven't been attending class."	Assume or diagnose. Example: "You seem depressed."
Listen more than you talk. Give the student space to share.	Jump immediately into problem-solving or lecturing.
Use calm, supportive language.	Match emotion, argue, or escalate tension.
Validate feelings. Example: "That sounds really difficult."	Minimize concerns. Example: "Everyone feels stressed."
Allow silence. Students may need time to think or respond.	Rush the conversation or pressure students to disclose more than they want to share.
Normalize help-seeking. Example: "A lot of students benefit from support."	Suggest they should just "push through it."
Ask direct safety questions if concerned. Example: "Are you thinking about hurting yourself?"	Avoid difficult questions because they feel uncomfortable.
Know your limits. Refer when concerns exceed your role.	Try to become the counselor or solve everything yourself.
Follow up when appropriate. A simple check-in matters.	Assume the problem resolved on its own.
Trust your instincts. If something feels concerning, consult or refer.	Ignore warning signs because you are unsure.

Mental Health Crisis

A mental health crisis can occur when a student is experiencing emotional, psychological, or behavioral distress that significantly interferes with their ability to cope, function safely, or maintain emotional stability. Crises can develop suddenly or build over time. While some students may clearly express that they are struggling, others may show distress through changes in behavior, emotional regulation, communication, or functioning.

Faculty and staff are not expected to assess, diagnose, or treat a mental health condition. However, recognizing warning signs and responding appropriately can help students receive timely support and intervention. When in doubt, consult or seek support. It is always appropriate to ask for help when a student appears to be in crisis.

What is a Mental Health Crisis?

A student may be experiencing a mental health crisis when they are:

- Expressing thoughts of suicide or self-harm
- Threatening harm to others
- Appearing severely disoriented, confused, or disconnected from reality
- Unable to care for basic needs or maintain safety
- Displaying escalating aggressive or erratic behavior
- Appearing significantly impaired due to substance use or mental health symptoms

De-Escalation: How to Respond in the Moment

Stay Calm: People tend to mirror our reactions. If we remain calm, the person is more likely to remain calm as well.

Speak slowly, keep your voice calm and steady

Use open body language

Respect Personal Space: Allowing space tends to decrease anxiety. If possible, stand 1-3 feet away from the person. Some people do not like to be touched when escalated.

Be Empathetic and Nonjudgmental: Pay attention to the person's feelings and try not to judge them. Remember that whatever the person is going through is important to them in that moment.

Acknowledge Feelings: Validation can lower emotional intensity.

"That sounds really difficult."

"I can understand why this feels overwhelming."

Be Clear and Concise: A person who is escalated may not be able to think, communicate clearly, or focus on what you have to say. Be clear and concise and offer respectful choices and consequences.

Offer Choices When Possible: Crisis can make students feel powerless.

"Would you rather sit here or move somewhere quieter?"

"Would it help if we contacted someone together?"

Focus on Immediate Safety: Is this student safe right now?

If you are concerned about immediate safety: Call 911 / University Police

If there is emotional or psychological crisis without immediate danger: Contact the Counseling Clinic for consultation and support.- 217-581-3413. After Hours, please leave a message and call 988

How to Refer During a Mental Health Crisis

During a crisis, a referral should be supportive, collaborative, and focused on safety.

1. Stay with the Student (when safe).
   Remain with them or ensure another appropriate person stays present until support is connected. If you feel unsafe at any time, prioritize safety and call for immediate assistance.

2. Be direct,calm and supportive and introduce referral
   "I'm concerned about what you're experiencing, and I want to help connect you with support."
   "Based on what you've shared, I'm concerned enough that I'd like us to connect with support together."

3. Use a "warm handoff" when possible
   A warm handoff may include:
   - Calling the Counseling Clinic together
   - Walking the student to the Counseling Clinic
   - Helping contact the Dean of Students
   - Staying with the student while arrangements are made
   - If it is "after hours", Staff may call and leave a message for Counseling Clinic and call 988

Students in crisis may struggle to follow through independently, even when they agree they need help.

Follow-Up Matters

If appropriate, check in with the student later. A brief message such as:

"I *wanted to check in and see how you're doing."*

can reinforce support and connection.

IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED-Call 911

- Has a weapon
- Threatens imminent harm to self or others with plan/intent
- Appears unable to stay safe
- Is highly aggressive or escalating
- Appears severely disoriented or disconnected from reality

URGENT-SAME DAY REFERRAL

- Unable to regulate emotions
- Thoughts to end life
- Thoughts to harm others, but not an immediate threat
- Self harming behaviors
- Shows major changes in behavior or functioning
- Statements of helplessness

Submit an Incident Report to Dean of Students

If a student refuses help and...

- Safety is a concern-call 911 immediately
  - If a student appears to be at immediate risk of harming themselves or others, unable to remain safe, or creating a dangerous situation, your safety is your first priority
- If Immediate safety is not a concern, call Counseling Clinic and/or Dean of Students Office to refer the student to resources

REMEMBER: You are not expected to manage a crisis alone or to be a Crisis Counselor.

When in doubt: Consult. Refer. Ask for help.

Whenever possible, contact offices or departments rather than individual staff members

Threatening, Aggressive, or Disruptive Behavior

Understand the Difference

Disruptive Behavior

Behavior that interferes with the classroom, office environment, or normal functioning but does not necessarily suggest immediate danger.

Examples:

- Interrupting class repeatedly
- Refusing to follow classroom expectations
- Emotional outbursts
- Raised voice or argumentative behavior
- Refusing to leave after class
- Escalated frustration
- Inappropriate emails or confrontational communication

Response:

Set limits, redirect behavior, address privately if possible, and refer when appropriate.

Aggressive or Threatening Behavior

Behavior that creates fear, intimidation, or concern for safety.

Examples:

- Verbal threats
- Intimidation
- Threatening gestures
- Invading personal space
- Yelling or escalating anger
- Destruction of property
- Threatening emails or messages
- Statements suggesting revenge or violence
- References to weapons

Response:

Prioritize safety and seek immediate support.

Submit incident report.

Most distressed students are not violent, and disruptive behavior does not automatically mean a student is dangerous. However, behavior that feels threatening, intimidating, aggressive, or significantly disruptive should be taken seriously.

Your role is not to control the student or resolve the situation alone.

You role is to:

- Maintain safety
- Reduce escalation
- Set clear limits
- Seek support when needed

Early warning signs of escalation

- Raised voice or yelling
- Pacing
- Clenched fists/Rigid posture
- Visible Distress
- Threatening language
- Extreme anger
- Fixation on unfairness
- Invading personal space
- Statements such as:
  "You will regret this"
  "This is not over"

Submit an Incident Report to Dean of Students

Threatening, Aggressive, or Disruptive Behavior

De-Escalation: How to Respond in the Moment

Stay Calm: People tend to mirror our reactions. If we remain calm, the person is more likely to remain calm as well.

Speak slowly, keep your voice calm and steady
Use open body language

Respect Personal Space: Maintain physical distance. Avoid cornering the student. Keep an exit accessible.

Use De-escalating Language: Use reflective listening. Focus on reducing intensity.

"It sounds like you are saying..."

Set Clear Limits: You can acknowledge emotions while still setting boundaries. Be clear and concise and offer respectful choices and consequences.

"I want to hear your concerns, but I want to be very clear that we must both do this without raising our voices. Otherwise, we shouldn't continue this today"

Focus on Immediate Safety

Try saying:

"I want to understand what is upsetting you."

"I want to help, but I need us to speak respectfully."

"Let's slow this down for a moment."

"I'm concerned about what is happening right now."

"I think we need additional support."

Avoid saying:

"Calm down."

"You are being irrational."

"You need to stop acting like this."

"What is wrong with you?"

When to end the interaction

- Behavior continues to escalate
- The student refuses to respect boundaries
- You feel unsafe
- Threats are made
- Aggression increases

You can say:

- *"I want to continue this conversation, but I do not feel this can happen safely right now."*
- *"I think it is best that we stop for today, but I do not want to drop this, so let's set a time to come back together and then we can both have the chance to settle down"*

After the Incident

Document what occurred
Report concerns to Dean of Students using the incident reporting form
Follow up with student if appropriate
Seek support for yourself

Submit an Incident Report to Dean of Students

Threatening, Aggressive, or Disruptive Behavior
What to do Vs. What not to do

WHAT TO DO ✓	WHAT NOT TO DO X
Stay calm and lower your voice. A calm tone can reduce escalation.	Match the student's intensity. Arguing, yelling, or showing frustration may escalate the situation.
Maintain a respectful, neutral tone.	Use sarcasm, criticism, or shame.
Give personal space. Keep a safe distance and avoid crowding the student.	Corner, block, or crowd the student.
Keep an exit accessible for yourself and others.	Trap yourself in a room or block the student's exit.
Acknowledge emotions without agreeing to inappropriate behavior. Example: "I can see you're frustrated."	Dismiss or minimize feelings. Example: "You're overreacting."
Set calm, clear limits. Example: "I want to hear your concerns, but I need us to speak respectfully."	Threaten punishment in the moment. Example: "If you don't stop, you'll regret it."
Use short, simple statements. Escalated individuals process less information.	Over explain, lecture, or argue facts.
Focus on safety. Ask yourself: "Is everyone safe right now?"	Ignore warning signs or assume things will calm down on their own.
Trust your instincts. If something feels unsafe, get help.	Stay in a situation that feels unsafe because you worry about overreacting.
End the interaction if escalation continues. Example: "I'm going to get additional support."	Continue arguing with an escalating student.
Call for support when needed. Consult colleagues, supervisors, Counseling, Dean of Students or Police depending on severity.	Try to manage a threatening situation entirely on your own.
Document concerning behavior afterward by submitting an incident report.	Assume someone else will report it.

Submit an Incident Report to Dean of Students

Supporting Students Impacted by Interpersonal Violence

Interpersonal violence refers to harmful behaviors that occur between people in relationships or social interactions and may impact a student's safety, well-being, academics, or ability to participate in campus life.

This may include:

- Sexual assault – Any sexual act or contact without consent
- Dating violence – Violence committed by a current or former romantic or intimate partner
- Domestic violence – Abuse within intimate or household relationships
- Stalking – Repeated behaviors causing fear, distress, or monitoring
- Sexual harassment – Unwelcome sexual conduct affecting educational access
- Relationship violence or coercive control – Patterns of manipulation, intimidation, threats, or emotional abuse

Students impacted by interpersonal violence may experience emotional, physical, academic, or behavioral changes.

Understanding Confidently and Privacy
Many students assume conversations with faculty or staff are confidential. It is important to explain privacy limitations clearly and compassionately.
Before a student shares, inform them of confidentiality limitations:

"I want to support you. Before you share, I want you to know that I may need to connect this information to our Title IX office so they can offer support and resources. You are not in trouble, and someone can discuss options with you."

Quick Response Guide:
- Listen non-judgmentally
- Believe the student
- Focus on safety
- Explain reporting responsibilities honestly
- Connect to resources such as Counseling Clinic
- Submit report to Title IX office

Don't:
- Promise confidentiality you can not provide
- Investigate yourself or ask unnecessary details
- Pressure the student to report to the police
- Minimize or question the experience
- Attempt to "fix" the situation

More information on the Title IX Page

Title IX Reporting form

Special Student Situations: Quick Guide

Students may experience a wide range of personal, emotional, behavioral, and situational challenges that affect their well-being and ability to function academically. The goal is not to diagnose the issue, but to respond supportively, maintain safety, and connect students with appropriate support.

Grief/Loss

You may notice:
Tearfulness
Withdrawal from class or peers
Difficulty concentrating
Missing assignments
Attendance concerns
Fatigue
Appearing emotionally numb

Helpful Responses:
"I wanted to check in and see how you were doing"
"What kind of support would be helpful right now"

Avoid:
"Everything happens for a reason"
"At least..."

Refer to:
Counseling Clinic
Dean of Students
Academic Support (if applicable)

Anxiety/Panic/Emotional Overwhelm

You may notice:
Crying
Difficulty focusing
Emotional flooding
Rapid breathing

Helpful Responses:
"I am noticing you seem overwhelmed, Lets' focus on what you need right now"
Move to a quiet place, Slow the pace, Speak Calmly

Avoid:
"Just calm down"
Rushing the conversation

Refer to:
Counseling Clinic
Dean of Students
Academic Support (if applicable)

Substance Use Concerns

You may notice:
Appearing intoxicated
Smell of alcohol
Sudden behavioral changes
Missing Class
Erratic Behavior

Helpful Responses:
"I am concerned about what I am noticing"
"You do not seem like yourself today"

Refer to:
Counseling Clinic
Dean of Students

International Student Distress

Consider:
Homesickness
Cultural adjustment
Isolation
Visa-related stress
Language barriers

Helpful Responses:
"Change can be difficult"
"You do not have to navigate this alone"
Avoid assumptions based on culture and minimizing adjustment stress

Refer to:
Counseling Clinic
Dean of Students
International Students Office

Basic Needs and Student Well-Being

For many students, challenges related to food insecurity, housing instability, financial strain, transportation, childcare, technology access, healthcare, or unmet basic needs can significantly impact emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall success.

Students struggling to meet basic needs may appear overwhelmed, distracted, exhausted, emotionally distressed, or academically disengaged. In some cases, students may not openly ask for help due to embarrassment, stigma, fear, or uncertainty about available resources.

What are Basic Needs

Food Security - Reliable access to nutritious food
Housing - Access to safe and stable housing
Financial Stability - The ability to afford essential expenses
Transportation - Reliable transportation to work, class, and/or appointments
Access to Healthcare - Physical and mental healthcare access
Childcare - Support for student parents and student caregivers
Academic Resources - Reliable internet, computers, academic materials

How to talk to a student about Basic Needs:
Students may feel embarrassed or ashamed discussing financial or personal hardship. Approach with care, empathy, and curiosity rather than assumptions.

"You seem like you've been carrying a lot lately. How are things going?"
"Sometimes challenges outside the classroom affect school. Is there anything making things harder right now?"
"That sounds really stressful. Let's see what support might be available."

Need	Resource	Contact
Food Insecurity	Panther Food Pantry	**Panther Food Pantry** 1347 McAfee Gym
Financial Hardship/Emergency Assistance	Financial Aid Office	**Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships**- Student Services Building East Wing (217) 581-6405
	Dean of Students Office	**Dean of Students Office** 217-581-3827 deanofstudents@eiu.edu
Child Care Resource	Child Care Resource and Referral / Child Care Assistance Program	**Child Care Assistance Program** 3015 Ninth Street Hall 217-581-7081
Transportation	Panther Shuttle	
Housing	EIU Housing and Dining Dean of Students Office	**Housing and Dining-** Human Services 1st floor 217-581-5111

How to Refer

A referral does not mean you are expected to solve the problem . it means helping connect students to the support they may need. You do not need certainty to make a referral.

1. Talk with the student (If appropriate and able)
   Begin with a supportive conversation and focus on what you have observed.
2. Determine the level of concern
   - Mild-Moderate: Supportive conversation and referral to campus resources/departments
   - Elevated: Consult with appropriate offices. Warm referral to Counseling. Submit incident report through Dean of Students.
   - Immediate Safety: Call 911

3. Call the appropriate office (i.e. Counseling, Dean of Students) and provide students name, E number, and concerns, including observed behavior.

Whenever possible, contact offices or departments rather than individual staff members. This helps ensure a timely response if a specific employee is unavailable or no longer serving in that role.

Academic Alert	Use when a student is experiencing academic difficulty such as: • Frequent absences • Missed assignments • Poor exam or course performance • Lack of engagement or participation • Early signs of academic disengagement	Academic Alerts notify appropriate academic support staff so they can reach out to the student and connect them with tutoring, advising, and academic success resources.	Submit alert through EIU Academic Alert system. Continue normal classroom communication and encourage student to connect with support services.
Dean of Students Incident Report	Use when concerns involve well-being, behavior, or broader student concerns, such as: • Emotional distress or concerning behavior • Sudden changes in functioning • Housing, food, or financial instability • Disruptive or concerning classroom behavior • Hospitalization or significant health concerns	The Dean of Students Office reviews reports and coordinates outreach, support, and care management. They may connect students with counseling, emergency assistance, academic support, or other campus resources.	Submit a formal report through the Dean of Students reporting system. Document observable behavior and continue to support student as appropriate
Counseling Referral	Use when a student shows emotional or mental health concerns, such as • Anxiety, Depression • Grief • Suicidal thoughts • Trauma	The Counseling Clinic provides confidential mental health services including short-term counseling, crisis support, and referrals for longer-term care when needed.	Encourage student to contact Counseling Clinic Offer to assist with connection (warm handoff) when appropriate. For immediate safety concerns, call 911 or campus emergency services.

Additional referral routes will be available with the addition of Navigate 360

Privacy, FERPA, and Documentation

What is FERPA?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student educational records. FERPA generally limits the sharing of personally identifiable student information without a student's consent. FERPA allows appropriate information sharing within EIU when there is a legitimate educational, wellness, or safety reasons. FERPA limits sharing student information outside of EIU without student consent.

FERPA **DOES NOT** prevent you from helping a student.
FERPA **DOES** allow information sharing when there is a legitimate educational or safety concern.

Ask yourself: "Does this person have a legitimate role in helping support, educate, or maintain the safety of this student?" "

Examples:

- Consulting with Dean of Students
- Academic concern discussions
- Consultation with Counseling
- Housing coordination around student support

Information to include in Referral or Documentation:

- Observable behaviors
- Factual information
- Specific concerns
- Dates and times
- Direct statements
- Safety concerns
- Threats
- Follow-up action taken
- Referral made

Example:
"Student appeared agitated, raised voice, and stated, 'People are out to get me.' Student left classroom abruptly

Less Helpful:
"Student seemed crazy and unstable"

MYTH	FACT
"FERPA means I can't tell anyone anything."	False. FERPA allows sharing when there is legitimate educational interest or safety concern.
"I need a student's permission to report concerning behavior."	False. You may report concerns through appropriate university channels.
"I can't consult with Counseling or Dean of Students."	False. Consultation is appropriate and encouraged.
"FERPA prevents me from helping a student in crisis."	False. Safety concerns always take priority.

Housing Staff (quick reference guide)

Residence hall staff are often among the first people to notice when a student may be struggling. Because of regular interactions and close community living, Housing staff frequently observe changes in behavior, emotional well-being, social functioning, or safety concerns before anyone else.

You may notice:

- Isolation or withdrawal
- Changes in hygiene or self-care
- Frequent crying or emotional distress
- Concerning roommate conflict
- Significant behavior changes
- Disruptive or aggressive behavior
- Suicidal statements or concerning comments
- Substance use concerns
- Class avoidance or sleeping excessively
- Food insecurity or financial hardship

Trust changes in behavior, patterns, and your instincts.

Housing On-Call Numbers:

North Quad on Call (Lincoln, Stevenson, Powell-Norton, Pemberton, McKinney, Ford, Weller): 217-549-0170

South Quad on Call (Lawson, Andrews, Taylor): 217-549-9307

Courts on Call (University Court, Greek Court): 217-549-9065

Senior Staff On Call: 217-208-7000

University Apartments: UPD

You are not expected to be a counselor or solve a student's problems.

Your Role is to:

- Notice Concerns
- Check In
- Document Concerns
- Follow the Chain of Support
- Connect Students to Help

Observe and Document

- Behavioral changes
- Roommate concerns
- Safety concerns
- Concerning statements
- Emotional distress
- Repeated incidents

Focus on:

Facts, behaviors, and observations

Helpful Things to Say

TRY:
✓ "I noticed you haven't seemed like yourself lately."
✓ "I wanted to check in and see how things are going."
✓ "I'm glad you told me."
✓ "You don't have to go through this alone."
✓ "I think we should get some additional support."

AVOID:
✗ "You'll be fine."
✗ "Everyone is stressed."
✗ "You're overreacting."
✗ "Don't tell anyone I said this."
✗ "I'll keep this completely secret."

REMEMBER: Consult a supervisor rather than manage high-concern situations independently or you are unsure how to handle a situation.

Housing Staff (quick reference guide)

WHAT TO DO ✓	WHAT NOT TO DO X
Check in when something feels "off." Trust changes in behavior or patterns.	Ignore concerns because they seem "minor." Small concerns may grow into larger issues.
Talk privately with the student when appropriate.	Confront students publicly or in front of peers/roommates.
Lead with care and concern. Example: "I wanted to check in because I've noticed you seem different lately."	Sound accusatory or disciplinary. Example: "What's wrong with you?"
Listen and support. You do not need to fix the problem.	Try to become the counselor or solve everything yourself.
Focus on facts and observable behavior.	Assume, diagnose, or label behavior. Example: "They're unstable."
Document objectively. Include behaviors, statements, and observations.	Write emotional, judgmental, or vague documentation.
Follow the chain of support and call up. RA/SSA → ARD → Building Directors	Manage significant concerns alone or skip communication.
Share concerns early. It is okay to over-consult.	Wait until the situation becomes a crisis.
Take suicidal comments seriously. Contact your supervisor immediately.	Assume students are "just venting" or joking.
Stay with students during serious emotional crises (if safe).	Leave a distressed or suicidal student alone.
Get help immediately for safety concerns.	Try to physically intervene or de-escalate dangerous situations alone.
Maintain professional boundaries. Be supportive while staying within your role.	Promise secrecy or become the student's only support system.
Use supportive language. Example: "You don't have to handle this alone."	Minimize concerns. Example: "Everyone feels stressed."
Notify Housing leadership after emergencies or major concerns.	Assume someone else already reported it.

Whenever possible, contact offices or departments rather than individual staff members. This helps ensure a timely response if a specific employee is unavailable, out of the office, or no longer serving in that role.

Higher Education Resources

- University of Missouri–Kansas City. Quick Guide: Supporting Students in Distress.
  https://www.umkc.edu/student-affairs/docs/quick-guide-supporting-students-in-distress.pdf
- University of Maryland, Division of Student Affairs. Assisting Students in Distress: A Guide for Faculty and Staff.
  https://studentaffairs.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2022-09/Assisting-Students-Distress.pdf
- Jed Foundation (JED). Resources for Supporting College Student Mental Health.
  https://jedfoundation.org
- The Higher Education Mental Health Alliance (HEMHA). Balancing Safety and Support on Campus: A Guide for Campus Teams.
  https://hemha.org
- The Ohio State University Office of Student Life. (2023). Creating a culture of care: How to support distressed individuals.
  https://studentconduct.osu.edu/documents/culture-of-care-guide-tagged-final-2023.pdf

Professional Organizations

- American College Health Association (ACHA)
  https://www.acha.org
- National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)
  https://www.naspa.org
- Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors (AUCCCD)
  https://www.aucccd.org
- The Jed Foundation (JED)
  https://jedfoundation.org

Federal Resources

- U.S. Department of Education. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
  https://studentprivacy.ed.gov
- U.S. Department of Education. Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health.
  https://www.ed.gov
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
  https://www.samhsa.gov
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
  https://988lifeline.org

Crisis Intervention & Suicide Prevention

- Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC)
  https://sprc.org
- QPR Institute (Question, Persuade, Refer)
  https://qprinstitute.com
- Mental Health First Aid USA
  https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org

Acknowledgment

This handbook was developed to support Eastern Illinois University faculty, staff, and Housing personnel in recognizing, responding to, and referring students experiencing distress. It is intended as an educational resource and quick reference guide. It is not a substitute for professional mental health assessment, emergency response procedures, university policy, or legal guidance.
Faculty and staff are encouraged to consult with the Counseling Clinic, Dean of Students Office, University Housing, University Police, or other appropriate university officials whenever they have concerns about a student's well-being or safety.

Student Concerns	Campus Resources	Contact
Safety Concerns and Medical Emergencies	University Police Department 911	217-581-3213 911
Thoughts of Harm to Self/Others, Psychosis, Decline in Functioning	EIU Counseling Clinic 988	217-581-3413 988
Substance Use	EIU Counseling Clinic	217-581-3413
Medical Withdrawal, Medical Leave of Absence, Reinstatement	EIU Counseling Clinic	217-581-3413
Accommodations	Office of Accessibility and Accommodations	217-581-6583
Classroom Disruptions	Dean of Students	217-581-3827
Hazing	Dean of Students	217-581-3827
Hate or Crime Incidents, Sexual Violence, Domestic Violence, Stalking	University Police Department Dean of Students Office of Civil Rights and Diversity	217-581-3213 217-581-3827 217-581-5020
Legal Advice	Student Legal Services	217-581-6054
Food Insecurity	EIU Food Pantry	217-581-3967
Financial	Dean of Students Financial Aid	217-581-3827 217-581-6405
Mental Health Concerns	EIU Counseling Clinic	217-581-3413
Medical	SBL/EIU Medical Clinic	217-581-3013
Academic	Academic Support Center Writing Center TRiO Student Support Services	217-581-6696 217-581-5929 217-581-7849
Career	Career Services	217-581-2412
Housing	Housing & Dining	217-581-5111
Childcare	Child Care Resource & Referral	217-581-6698
Military	Military Student Assistance Center	217-581-7888
Identity & Belonging	Office of Belonging, Access, Engagement Student Life Office TRiO Student Support Services	217-581-7902 217-581-5522 217-581-7849

Student Success & Support Resources