

How to Help Students of Concern

A Safety Resource Guide for Santa Barbara City College Faculty and Staff

Student Support Services

Behavior Intervention Team (BIT) 2015

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Part I – Introduction

SBCC is committed to the health and safety of all members of our community. To safeguard our community the Behavior Intervention Team (BIT) has developed a comprehensive reporting system to share appropriate information so students can receive or stay connected to the academic support and student wellness services they need. This reporting system is one element of a safe and supportive campus community.

This guide is designed as a reference and resource for faculty and staff members and to support BIT training efforts at SBCC. It specifically provides faculty and staff with information about how to seek assistance and report behaviors of concern. Additional information is provided about managing difficult situations, behavioral signs that warrant concern, as well as resources for assisting students at SBCC.

Responding to Students of Concern

Within the academic setting various manifestations of student behavior can cause concern to faculty and staff. The purpose of this guide is to provide faculty and staff with basic tools to respond to these concerns.

Part I (this section) includes general guidelines for responding to students, SBCC resources and documentation procedures.

Part II includes strategies for dealing with disruptive students in the classroom and in other work environments– on campus, or in the online environment.

Part III includes a brief description of behavior patterns, suggestions for appropriate responses, and decision trees for specific interventions.

The decision trees and information are designed to assist faculty and staff in developing a plan of action based on the student’s behavior and to identify campus resources that can assist you. It is important to note that the College does not expect you to assume the role of counselor, therapist or security officer. For those responsibilities, SBCC has trained professionals who are ready to assist you with students who are of concern to you.

In situations, when a student is severely impaired or potentially dangerous, SBCC Campus Security will need to be alerted. Campus Security is also available to assist individual departments in formulating their own safety plans in accordance with their physical layout, degree, and nature of student contact and role within the College.

Faculty and staff can play an invaluable role in helping students who are in distress. Your expression of interest, concern, and compassion is an important factor toward a student seeking the assistance they need. We hope this guide will help you to identify a potentially difficult situation and provide you with specific ideas and resources when you encounter student behaviors that are of concern.

We encourage faculty and staff to document incidents using the Student of Concern Report form and submit the form online. The link for the online form is located on the SBCC Pipeline home page under **Student of Concern Report**. Potential interventions will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

It is important to recognize that dealing with disruptive or distressed students can be psychologically and emotionally difficult. Consequently, it can be very helpful to discuss these issues with a colleague or supervisor or seek professional stress debriefing assistance through the College's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), S.A.V.E. at 962-5387. You may also contact the SBCC Human Resources Office at 965-0581 ext. 2258 if you have questions or require additional information about the Employee Assistance Program.

When to Call SBCC Campus Security

You should call SBCC Campus Security at 730-4200 if the incident is nearing the level of crisis. A crisis exists whenever a person's behavior poses imminent danger of:

- causing or threatening harm to self or others,
- impeding lawful activities of other members of the campus community,
- interfering with the health, safety, or well-being of other members of the SBCC community and/or,
- experiencing a health emergency.

If you are ever unsure of whether or not a crisis exists, err on the side of caution and call SBCC Campus Security at 805-730-4200, 9-911 (when using an on-campus line) or 911 when using your cell phone for assistance. A dispatcher will either coordinate a campus security response or give you information and/or referrals to assist the student in need.

Protocol for Incidents Involving Students of Concern

The purpose of this protocol is to guide and sustain a campus network where the SBCC campus community can respond proactively to situations involving students of concern. It is the intent of this protocol to work in a coordinated and collaborative fashion to address students of concern in a timely manner.

- 1) If a student is involved in an incident that includes:
 - a) threats or acts of harm to self and/or others,
 - b) behaviors that interfere with campus safety,
 - c) inappropriate behaviors that are disruptive or abusive in nature,
 - d) behavior that demonstrates the student is distressed but is not disruptive, or
 - e) other cases of concern, **responsible faculty and staff should document the situation as thoroughly as possible using the [online Student of Concern form](#), and submit to the Dean of Student Support Services at 805-730-4200 as soon as possible.**
- 2) If there is any question as to the seriousness of the incident or if an imminent threat exists, contact SBCC Campus Security immediately for threat analysis.
 - a) After facilitating necessary emergency procedures, Campus Security Officers document the situation as thoroughly as possible, collect witness documentation, and provide all allowable documentation to BIT Team as soon as possible.
 - b) Student of Concern forms or Campus Security reports are submitted to the Dean of Student Support Services.
- 3) After Student of Concern Report forms or Campus Security reports are submitted to the Dean of Student Support Services:
 - a) reports of potentially dangerous behaviors or disruptive behaviors will be addressed by the Dean of Student Support Services in consultation with Campus Security and the BIT Team.
 - b) reports of students in distress will be reviewed by the BIT Team and action or intervention will be determined.
- 4) If the report involves potentially dangerous behaviors or disruptive behaviors, conduct and/or criminal issues will be managed by the Office of Student Life and adjudicated under college policy and procedures.
- 5) If the report involves potentially dangerous behaviors, or disruptive behaviors, or a student in distress **and** the student is referred to Student Health and Wellness for counseling services, a release of information may be required to ensure that the student meets with health care professional. Any potential remaining conduct issues around incident will be handled separately by the Dean of Student Support Services at the appropriate time.

Part II – Dealing with the Disruptive Student

Preventing Classroom Disruption

Faculty members recognize the special responsibilities placed upon them to encourage learning, demonstrate respect for students, and observe the regulations of the College to promote the advancement of knowledge. Students are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior toward other members of the college community. Disruptive students, whether in the classroom or online, hinder the academic process and negatively impact student learning. Disruptive student conduct is prohibited by SBCC's Student Conduct Code.

What constitutes disruption?

Disruption, as applied to the academic setting, means behaviors that interfere with the right of other students to learn or of the instructors to teach.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Persistently speaking without being recognized
- Persistent use of cell phones, beepers, etc.
- Personal insults
- Interrupting other speakers
- Distracting the class from the subject of discussion
- Refusal to comply with faculty direction
- In extreme cases, physical threats, harassing behavior (contact SBCC Campus Security)

Prevention

The best time to deal with disruption is before it begins. Faculty can take steps to reduce the likelihood of disruptive behaviors in the classroom.

- Explicitly state expectations for conduct in the syllabus. This may include:
 - Participation in class activities
 - Guidelines for communication
 - Expectations about the use of cell phones and pagers
 - Attendance/tardiness policy
 - Late assignment policy
- Explain consequences of inappropriate behavior
- Review these expectations with students during first class meeting
- Model respectful communication with your students
- Facilitate respectful exchange of ideas among your students
- Respond to problems consistently and in a timely manner
- Consider applying a classroom behavior contract (appendix 1)

Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Situations

Office and front line staff often have face to face contact with students. They may be the initial responders to students who are in crisis, angry, verbally abusive, or potentially dangerous. These general suggestions can be utilized with the behavior pattern “do’s” and “don’ts” identified in Part III of this document. The following guidelines provide general principles for effective verbal intervention.

- 1. Remain Calm**

Remember that the verbally escalating person is beginning to lose control. If the person senses that you are also losing control, the situation may get worse. Try to keep your emotions under control, even when challenged, insulted or threatened. This may be easier said than done, especially when a student is making threats, or using abusive language, but it is important in de-escalating the situation.

- 2. Be Empathetic**

Try not to judge or discount the feelings of others. Whether or not you think the feelings are justified, those feelings are real to the other person. You may want to acknowledge them by saying things like, “I understand that this is very frustrating for you.” or “I’m sorry that you’re feeling distressed about...”

- 3. Watch Your Body Language**

As a person becomes increasingly agitated, he or she will pay less attention to your words and more attention to your body language. Be aware of your use of space, posture, and gestures. Avoid gestures that might seem threatening. Make sure your nonverbal behavior is consistent with your verbal message.

- 4. Respect Personal Space**

Maintain a safe distance (2 - 3 feet) from an agitated person. Invading personal space tends to increase the individual’s anxiety and may lead to increased agitation.

- 5. Keep It Simple**

Be clear and direct in your message. Avoid jargon and complicated choices. A person who is beginning to lose rational control may not be processing information as he or she usually does. Complex messages may increase anxiety and make self-control more difficult.

- 6. Set and Enforce Reasonable Limits**

If the person becomes belligerent, defensive or disruptive be sure to state limits and directives clearly and concisely. When setting limits, offer choices and consequences to the acting-out individual. For example, “If you calm down, I can continue to assist you. If not, you will need to leave.” Consider saying “It’s not my role to make that kind of decision here at the College. Let me locate someone who can help you.” or “It’s hard for me to understand what you are saying when you are shouting. Please lower your voice so that I can better help you.”

- 7. Request Assistance When Necessary**

If you perceive any threat, call SBCC Campus Security at 730-4200. In such situations your safety and those of others in your area are of utmost importance. The use of telephone “code words”

or alarm buttons may be a good strategy and should be discussed and developed within your department. If the student is angry or demanding but you do not sense an immediate threat, he or she can be referred to your supervisor or to Student Health and Wellness Services, 965-0581 ext. 2298.

8. **Document The Incident** – Submit the Student of Concern Report form.

Core Elements of Communicating with a Student in Distress

- Confirm that you have heard what the student has said.
- Express concern for the student.
- Refer the student to SBCC resources or contact SBCC Campus Security.

Guidelines for Student Behavioral Management

Distressed Behavior

- 1) If student demonstrates distressed behavior but is not disruptive, go to item #2 below.
 - a) Distressed behavior includes: tearfulness, anxiety, irritation, depression, or inability to concentrate.
- 2) Obtain consultation form from Student Health and Wellness Services if needed, 965-0581 ext.2298. Speak with student privately about what you are observing and your concerns if feasible/appropriate.
- 3) Inform student of assistance available on campus, then go to item #4 below.
 - a) If possible, help the student call for an appointment or walk them over to Student Wellness to ensure connection.
- 4) File a Student of Concern Report.
- 5) If distressed behavior persists and/or the student is unwilling to seek assistance contact the Dean of Student Support ext. 2202.

Disruptive Behavior

- 1) If student demonstrates inappropriate behavior that is disruptive or abusive in nature, to item #2 below.
 - a) Disruptive behavior includes unrelated or bizarre comments, defiance, use of inappropriate/offensive language abuse, anger or focusing attention on self.
- 2) Act immediately to stop inappropriate behavior and to prevent escalation. Speak with student confidentially when possible; clarify appropriate behavior, set expectations and consequences. Consult with the Dean of Student Support Services, ext. 2202.
- 3) You may ask the student to leave for the remainder of the class or activity as a result of the disruptive behavior, or at any point if the behavior continues. If student refuses, call Campus Security at 805-730-4200, 9-911 (when using an on-campus line) or 911 when using your cell phone.
- 4) File a Student of Concern Report. Provide your observations to SBCC Campus Security for their incident report.
- 5) Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from SBCC's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through S.A.V.E., 962-5387

Potentially Dangerous Behavior, Crisis Event

- 1) A crisis event exists whenever a person's behavior poses imminent danger of:
 - a) causing harm to self or others,
 - b) impeding the lawful activities of other members of the campus community or causing significant property damage, or
 - c) interfering with the health, safety, or well-being of other members of the SBCC community.
- 2) Call Campus Security at 805-730-4200, 9-911 (when using an on-campus line) or 911 when using your cell phone.
- 3) Protect the safety of others and self.
- 4) Depending on incident, buy time with the student by talking calmly and with concern, if possible, until assistance arrives.

- 5) Provide your observations to Campus Security for their incident report 730-4200.
- 6) File a Student of Concern Report
- 7) Obtain assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from SBCC's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through S.A.V.E., 962-5387

Part III - Student Behaviors

The Distressed Student

You may become aware of students in distress in a variety of ways. Students may directly communicate their issues and distress to you. This may occur in private or in front of others. You may also sense there is something amiss with a student on the basis of the behavior they exhibit or on the basis of some changes in their demeanor over time.

- Distressed students may express heightened apprehension and fear verbally or behaviorally. These concerns will likely interfere with their learning and ability to appropriately participate in class activities. You may notice agitation, physical shaking of hands, or a trembling voice with students who are anxious.
- Distressed students may appear tense, anxious, and mistrustful. These students may tend to interpret minor oversights as significant personal rejection or may overreact to insignificant occurrences. They may be overly concerned with fairness and being treated equally.
- Distressed student behavior may be indicated by a change over time from actively engaged and involved to a noticeable loss of interest in classroom or other activities. Normally outgoing students may seem to retreat from interaction and involvement. Attendance issues may become a problem for students in distress. Depending on your relationship with the student, he/she may verbally communicate their distress with you.
- Distressed students may share events or incidents of discrimination, harassment, sexual or physical violence. This may be expressed through various forms of communication.
- Distressed students may appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol in your class or at your office or an event.
- Distressed students can also be students who are physically ill or who are experiencing a medical emergency event.

DO...

- Express compassion without intimate friendship.
- Communicate your concern if appropriate.
- Be specific and clear regarding the standards of behavior you expect if the student's behaviors are interfering with classroom activities.
- Listen for indications the student may be suicidal such as statements like "Life doesn't seem worth living" or "I just feel I can't go on anymore."
- Share your intention of referring them for assistance.
- In cases where behavior or other signs of drug or alcohol abuse is evident contact SBCC Campus Security at 805-730-4200, 9-911 (when using an on-campus line) or 911 when using your cell phone.
- In cases of medical emergencies always contact SBCC Campus Security.

DON'T...

- Take responsibility for their emotional state by saying "I'll take care of it for you."
- Discount their distress by saying "It's not really that bad" or "You've really got nothing to worry about."
- Assure the student that you are his/her friend.
- Be overly warm and nurturing.
- Be cute or humorous.
- Challenge or agree with any mistaken or illogical beliefs.
- Say anything else that might discount the personal significance or intensity of the student's feelings.
- Agree to maintain student's confidentiality.

Distressed Student Decision Tree

First...

If appropriate, speak with the student privately about what you are observing and your concerns. Inform the student of assistance available through Student Health and Wellness Services at 965-0581 ext. 2298. If appropriate, help them call for an appointment or walk them over if possible.

If there is potential for harm contact Campus Security at 805-730-4200, 9-911 (when using an on-campus line) or 911 when using your cell phone.

Seek consultation from Student Health and Wellness Services at 965-0581 ext. 2298 or the Dean of Student Support Services at ext. 2202 if needed.

Then...

If Student Health and Wellness Services is not available and/or if behavior or verbal expression of distress is severe, or there is the potential of harm, contact Campus Security.

If alcohol or drugs are evident contact Campus Security.

If the student discloses events or behavior involving harassment or discrimination contact the Dean of Student Support Services at ext. 2202.

Then...

File a Student of Concern Report -or - provide your observations to SBCC Campus Security for their incident report.

And finally...

Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from SBCC's EAP through S.A.V.E., 962-5387.

The Disruptive Student

Often, large amounts of time and energy are given to students who make excessive demands on your time. They may seek to control your time and unconsciously believe that the amount of time they receive is a reflection of their worth. These students may also have difficulty keeping their comments consistent with the activities or with the topic or issue being discussed. Disruptive behavior can include verbal aggression.

DO...

- Set limits with them, “Excuse me; I need to attend to other things.”
- Remain calm and professional. Be sensitive to both verbal and nonverbal cues exhibited by a student who seems to be verbally aggressive.
- Intervene as soon as you hear or see the undesirable behavior and be consistent with your intervention.
- Give the class a break and invite the student to meet outside of the class to speak privately.
- Briefly and directly convey to the student that verbally aggressive behavior is unacceptable and that the matter must be resolved.
- If, in your best judgment, the verbally aggressive student’s threats to create a safety risk, contact SBCC Campus Security immediately. Use a phone out of sight/hearing of individual if possible or request someone else call. Report details of the incident.

DON'T...

- Wait until you have become too involved to seek assistance
- Let them use you as their only source of support.
- Get trapped into giving advice, “Why don’t you ...etc.?”
- Get defensive.
- Engage in a power struggle with the student.
- Respond with anger.
- Allow the disruptive behaviors continue.

Disruptive Student Decision Tree

First...

Seek consultation from Student Health and Wellness Services at 965-0581 ext. 2298 or Dean of Student Support Services at ext. 2202

Speak with the student privately about what you are observing and your concerns. Establish or reinforce behavioral expectations, or limits as necessary.

Then...

If the student is excessively demanding, threatening or refuses to comply with faculty or staff direction, contact Campus Security at 730-4200.

Then...

File a Student of Concern Report -and- Provide your observations to Campus Security at 805-730-4200, 9-911 (when using an on-campus line) or 911 when using your cell phone.

And finally...

Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from SBCC's EAP through S.A.V.E., 962-5387.

The Potentially Dangerous Student

Certain behaviors may signal imminent danger to self or others. For example: physical or verbal threats, harassment, expressing personal insults, refusal to comply with directions of college officials or faculty members, and continued escalation of threats might signal imminent danger.

Dramatic changes in behavior over time may indicate the potential for dangerous behavior or harm to self. Actively engaged and involved students may begin to demonstrate a loss of interest in classroom or other activities. Normally outgoing students may seem to retreat from interaction and involvement. Depending on your relationship with these students, they may communicate their sense of despondency or outline a specific plan to do harm to themselves.

You may also experience students whose behavior may be bizarre, eccentric or erratic. They may display disorganized speech and behavior, an inappropriate or complete lack of emotion, bizarre behavior that may include expressing hallucinations, strange beliefs that involve a serious misinterpretation of reality, social withdrawal, or an inability to connect with or track normal communication. While these behaviors, by themselves, may not indicate a potential for violence or danger, they may indicate the need for treatment or hospitalization. It should be noted that students who are experiencing these behaviors can be unpredictable and should be approached with caution.

DO...

- Contact SBCC Campus Security in situations where you believe violence is imminent.
- Immediately report students who share suicidal thoughts.
- Recognize that psychotic states can involve extreme emotion or lack of emotion and intense fear to the point of paranoia.
- Respond to the student with concern and kindness, and with firm reasoning. "I can see you're very upset. Please tell me how I can assist you."
- Articulate your specific concerns and state that you can see they need help.
- Be aware that the student may show no emotions or intense emotions.
- Ask another staff or student to call for help if needed.

DON'T...

- Assume the student will be able to care for him/herself.
- Agitate the student by arguing with their unrealistic beliefs.
- Assume the student comprehends what you are saying or doing.
- Release the student to the care of a roommate or friend without seeking professional consultation.
- Attempt to probe the delusional thinking.
- Assume responsibility by personally trying to resolve their issues.

Potentially Dangerous Student Decision Tree

First...

If the student is expressing or acting out behaviors that demonstrate the potential for imminent harm to self or others seek immediate assistance. Contact Campus Security at 805-730-4200, 9-911 (when using an on-campus line) or 911 when using your cell phone.

Or...

If the student is expressing or exhibiting behaviors that do not demonstrate the potential for imminent violence seek consultation or refer the student to get assistance with Student Health and Wellness Services at 965-0581 ext. 2298. This may include walking the student to Student Health and Wellness Services if possible. Student Health and Wellness Services is located in the Student Services Building, room 170 (located in the northeast corner of the building).

Then...

File a Student of Concern Report -or- Provide your observations to SBCC Campus Security for their incident report

And finally...

Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from SBCC's EAP through S.A.V.E., 962-5387.

Appendix 1: Sample Student Behavior Contract

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

I expect students to demonstrate restraint and maturity at ALL times; both in class and in their groups.

Being courteous in class and groups does not mean that you have to agree with everything that is being said. However, you will rarely get your way with anybody in life by being rude, overly aggressive or just plain hostile. If you disagree with me (or I with you) it is a good idea to wait and discuss the situation when you are not angry.

All interaction with your professor and other students in the class must be of a positive nature. Disrespectful and rude behavior towards the professor or fellow students will not be tolerated and any student who consistently violates this rule will be asked not to return to the classroom.

Failure to demonstrate common courtesy and respect toward others will result in your removal from the class.

Also, I ask that you do not study material from other classes during this class. If you feel that you must spend our class time studying or doing homework, please go to the library.

ACCEPTANCE OF CLASS TERMS

I have read all portions of the online syllabus and class schedule and have been given an opportunity to ask questions for clarification, if necessary. I further understand that all of the requirements and expectations will apply equally to all students in this class, including myself.

I understand that not every rule is listed in the syllabus. No professor can and should list every rule imaginable. I know right from wrong, and will use my common sense and behave in a responsible manner.

Name:

Signature:

Student Number:

Date:

Print name, sign, date and turn this page in to the professor.

Appendix 2: Student of Concern Report

The link for the online form is located on the SBCC Pipeline home page under [Student of Concern Report](#). You will be asked to enter the following information:

- Your name
- Your email
- Your phone number
- Your relationship to the student
- Whether or not you want to be contacted prior to the student being contacted.
- Name of Student
- Student ID number (K number)
- Student phone
- Student email
- Nature of Concern
 - Academic Issues – describe the behavior(s) or situation that led you to be concerned.
 - Behavioral Issues – describe the behavior(s) or situation that led you to be concerned.
 - Social/Emotional Issues – describe the behavior(s) or situation that led you to be concerned.
- Other issues
- Additional Information

After completing the online form, click the button to submit.