

Step 1

Recognize Warning Signs

Most faculty and staff understand the need for helping a troubled student; however, they may be uncertain as how best to do this.

Recognizing the warning signs does not require expertise, but does require an awareness of what to look for. Generally, warning signs usually fall into three categories: academic, physical and psychological.

Academic

- Dramatic drop in academic performance
- Persistent class absences or missed appointments
- Continuous seeking of accommodations, such as assignment and exam extensions
- Inappropriate disruptions in the classroom or other academic environment

Physical

- Sudden visible increase or decrease in weight
- Appearance of substance abuse symptoms, such as smell of alcohol, slurred speech, or bloodshot eyes
- Marked changes in concentration, attentiveness, or energy level
- Sudden withdrawal from interactions with faculty, staff, or peers
- Inappropriate or exaggerated behavior, such as aggressive, angry or emotional outburst, crying, or other “out of control” behavior

Psychological

- Disabling lack of confidence or lack of motivation
- Great frustration or distress with lack of career goal
- Verbal or written statement regarding suicide or harm to another

- Verbal or written statement regarding hopelessness, despondency, depression, anger and/or rage, an eating disorder, or abuse - physical, mental or sexual
- Direct statement indicating self or family problems of substance or chemical dependence
- Direct statement indicating a personal crisis, particularly loss, such as illness or death of a friend or family member, loss of a relationship with a boyfriend, girlfriend, husband or wife, loss of custody of a child, loss of job, or loss of housing
- Continuous need of your time to talk about personal or family issues
- Expression of concern about another student
- Your own sense, however vague, that something is seriously amiss with the student

Step 2

Listen to the Student

Students may share concerns with you through voicemail or e-mail. Respond as soon as possible and, whenever possible, follow-up in person.

When meeting with a student, it is important simply to listen: openly, patiently and receptively. When listening, “be yourself,” as much as possible. Your conversation will be more comfortable for both of you if you are focused on hearing what is being said, rather than what you are going to say. This will allow you to hear if warning signs are present.

Remember that it is not necessary for you to solve the student’s problem. The support you are providing is in the listening. A student may walk away feeling valued that someone took the time to really listen, and that his or her concerns have been heard and understood, perhaps for the first time.

Step 3

Express Concern & Engage the Student

Avoid negative comments about character or personality. DON’T say, “I’ve noticed you’ve been slacking lately.” Avoid negative comments about his or her life. DON’T say: “It seems like your life’s a mess right now.”

Express your concerns. DO say, “I’ve noticed that you haven’t been yourself lately. Is everything all right?”

Continue with a specific positive follow-up. DO say, “Most of the time you make valuable contributions in class. I’ve been missing that recently.” Then wait silently for a moment to see if the student offers a response.

Explain that your observations of the behavior have led you to believe that talking with a counselor could be helpful and that the college has counselors available. DO say, “I would be glad to assist you with this.”

Step 4

Making a Student Referral

When to Refer: In addition to warning signs listed above, consider referring a student when:

- You have reached the limits of your ability to help the student
- You identify too closely with the student or the problem
- A student has physical complaints, such as insomnia, headaches, dizziness, or stomach ailments; these symptoms may be manifestations of medical or psychological problems
- A student expresses thoughts of suicide – ethical, assertive intervention on your part is necessary

How to Refer: If you would like to consult prior to meeting with the student, a counselor can help with questions regarding how best to approach the student. To refer a student:

- Assure the student that seeking counseling is an indication of strength, not weakness.
- Share your knowledge of the counseling services; offer a particular name, when possible. Or, offer a simple explanation of the function of this office; it was created specifically to serve students' needs. This can decrease the student's anxiety.
- If the student accepts a referral, ideally the student would place the call. If unable, feel free to call in student's presence; student may be too distressed or inexperienced to initiate the call. Your action conveys caring and models how to make such a call.
- After explaining situation to counseling services, invite student to complete the call. Often if someone else starts the call, the student can finish the call. Confirm appointment with student.
- If the matter is urgent, share this information with counseling services. Emergency appointments and walk-ins are accommodated whenever possible.
- If the matter is urgent, accompany the student to the counseling office, if possible, or ask if a counselor can come to you and the student.
- Respect the student's right to reject the referral suggestion or to think about it first – **UNLESS THERE HAS BEEN TALK OF SUICIDE.** It is not unusual to avoid taking action initially.
- In cases not involving concerns of suicide, but the student is hesitant, suggest additional options, such as a trusted family member, adult friend of the family, physician, or religious leader.

Student Development and Counseling
(618) 468-4211 / (618) 468-4124
Caldwell Hall 2320

Emergency – On Campus

If the student refuses further assistance and student's safety is at risk, contact the **Security Office by dialing 0 from any campus phone or call (618) 468-7000 - ext. 0.**

Emergency – Off Campus

If the student refuses assistance and student's safety is at risk, contact **911 or Emergency Mental Health Services:**

<u>County</u>	<u>Number</u>
Jersey, Greene, & Calhoun:	(618) 498-6881
Madison County:	(618) 465-4388
Macoupin County:	(217) 854-3135 Ext. 1

Confidentiality

The counselors in Student Development and Counseling are committed to the code of confidentiality, and privacy can be assured - **UNLESS THE STUDENT IS A DANGER TO HIMSELF/HERSELF OR TO ANOTHER**, or if the student has directed the counselor to share specific information with a particular person.

The counselors in Student Development and Counseling see students for a variety of services; special learning needs, disabilities, advising, career decisions, study skills, time-management skills, test anxiety and general student questions and assistance. Therefore, not all students utilize this office for mental health counseling. This information is often helpful to the hesitant student who is concerned about confidentiality.

Cost and Convenience

There is no cost for counseling services through the Student Development and Counseling office. The office is conveniently located on the Godfrey campus in Caldwell Hall – Room 2320.

Community Referrals

If the student or campus counselor believes a student can be best served off-campus, assistance with referrals to community agencies and resources is provided.

What Can I Do?

Recognizing and Helping Students in Distress:

A Guide for Faculty and Staff

Student Development and Counseling
Caldwell Hall – Room 2320
(618) 468-4211

Lewis & Clark Community College
5800 Godfrey Road
Godfrey, IL 62035
(618) 468-7000
www.lc.edu

This information also available on
BlazerNet in Faculty Resources

