



**Prevention and Response  
to Critical Incidents  
at the  
University of Northern Iowa**

**Fall 2011**

**[www.uni.edu/safety](http://www.uni.edu/safety)**



## **The University of Northern Iowa is committed to the safety and well-being of all students, faculty and staff.**

A threat assessment team and additional teams are in place to prevent, address and respond to safety concerns or crisis situations that may occur. Descriptions of these teams and membership lists can be found at [www.uni.edu/safety](http://www.uni.edu/safety).

Individuals who are concerned about the behavior of someone who is potentially dangerous to themselves or to others or is disruptive, should contact the appropriate department listed below. Initially, the threat assessment team member contacted will consult with other members of the team to determine an immediate course of action or may respond with an individual consultation.

The team member will then provide follow up and will report to the team during the next regular meeting. Alternatively, the team member may request a special meeting to discuss the concern.

### **Reporting a concern during business hours**

Confidentiality laws don't prevent you from reporting a concern.

To report concerns, contact:

Student concern: Counseling Center, 273-2676

Dean of Students, 273-2332

Director of Residence Life, 273-2333

Faculty concern: Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, 273-2519

Dean of the college or department head

Staff concern: Director or Assoc. Director, Human Resource Services,  
273-2422

Visitors: UNI Police, 273-2712

### **Reporting a concern after business hours:**

Call UNI Police, 273-2712

### **Reporting an immediate danger or emergency:**

Call UNI Police Emergency 273-4000

or call 9-1-1

Urgent or crisis situations may include, but are not limited to:

- A risk of suicide.
- A threat of harm to others.
- Severely disorganized, psychotic or out-of-control behavior.
- Trauma, such as sexual assault or the death or injury of someone close.
- Be aware of these situations and take action.

## Confidentiality and Records Regarding Students

Confidentiality laws do not prevent you from reporting a concern. It is permissible for faculty and staff to report concerns about students to department heads, college deans, administrators, student health clinic, counseling center, public safety, dean of students, etc. If you have questions, you are encouraged to call and discuss the situation with someone to help you determine the appropriate course of action.

## Recognizing People in Distress

Some common indicators that students (and others) are experiencing distress include:

### Depression

Symptoms include sleep disturbances, poor concentration, change in appetite, loss of interest in pleasurable activities, withdrawal, poor hygiene, loss of self-esteem, suicidal thoughts and preoccupation with death.

### Agitation

Symptoms include being disruptive, restless or hyperactive, being antagonistic, and may include an increase in alcohol and/or drug abuse.

### Disorientation

Symptoms may include odd or unusual thinking and behavior, lack of awareness of what is going on around them, misperception of facts or reality, rambling or disconnected speech, and behavior that seems out of context or bizarre.

### Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Signs of abuse may include intoxication at inappropriate times, excessive absences or impaired performance.

### Suicidal Thoughts

Most people who attempt suicide communicate their distress through statements like “I don’t want to be here,” “No one would miss me if I were gone,” or “I’m going to kill myself.” Non-verbal messages could include giving away valued items, and putting legal, financial and other affairs in order. Indications of suicide should be taken seriously.

### Violence and Aggression

This includes physically violent behavior, verbal threats, threatening messages, harassing or stalking behavior, and papers or exams that contain violent or threatening material.

## Referring Faculty and Staff for Assistance

UNI offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for initial assessment/referral and short-term counseling. The program is available to UNI benefit-eligible faculty and staff and their eligible immediate family members to address programs affecting personal relationships, health and work performance. For more information, visit [www.uni.edu/hrs/eap](http://www.uni.edu/hrs/eap) or contact Human Resource Services at 273-2422.

## Referring a Student For Counseling

As with many of life's problems, earlier intervention is often better. A person who receives appropriate help sooner, rather than later, may be less likely to experience more severe symptoms or problems.

### When to Refer a Student to Counseling

The following signs may indicate a need to refer a student to the Counseling Center:

- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts or feelings
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Abrupt changes in behavior
- Inappropriate crying
- Outbursts of anger
- Low self-esteem
- Debilitating anxiety

Students also could benefit from counseling if they are having difficulty coping with a loss (e.g., death or relationship breakup), if they have experienced a traumatic incident (e.g., assault or accident), if they have experienced other significant stressors, or whenever emotional difficulties interfere with daily functioning.

### How to Refer a Student to Counseling

Consider the following guidelines when talking with a student:

- Talk to the student in a private setting.
- Listen carefully and express your concern.
- Repeat back the essence of what the student tells you.
- Avoid criticizing or sounding judgmental.
- Suggest the Counseling Center as a resource to help the student.
- Inform the student that counseling is confidential and free of charge.
- Suggest the student call or visit the Counseling Center to arrange an initial appointment.
- Offer to initiate contact with the Counseling Center.

## Urgent or Crisis Situations

If danger is immediate, call UNI Police Emergency at 273-4000 or 9-1-1. If you believe there is an urgent situation with a student, call the Counseling Center at 273-2676 and a staff member will consult with you about what to do. In many cases, the staff member will recommend that you send or bring the student to the Counseling Center to meet with an on-duty crisis counselor.

After regular office hours, call UNI Public Safety at 273-2712 and they will contact an on-call counseling center staff member to consult with you.

## Managing Classroom Disruptions

The Student Conduct Code describes disruption as “Disruption or obstruction of teaching, research, administration, disciplinary proceedings or other university activities, including its public service functions on or off campus, or of other authorized non-university activities when the conduct occurs on university premises.” Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Challenging the instructor’s authority in class.
- Inappropriate, disrespectful or uncivil responses to the comments or opinions of others in the classroom.
- Threats/challenges to do physical harm (even when stated in a joking manner).
- Intimidating or bullying behavior; personal attacks.
- Use of obscene or profane language.
- Excessive talking.
- Non-permitted communication during classroom instruction.
- Late arrival or early departure from class without permission.
- Use of personal electronic devices such as pagers, cell phones or PDAs.
- Coming to class under the influence of alcohol or another controlled substance.
- Bringing individuals to class who are not enrolled, including infants or children.
- Improper use of equipment, materials or resources.
- Overt inattentiveness.
- Inappropriate conduct while on field assignments.

## Steps for Preventing and Managing Disruptions in the Classroom

**Step 1** Set clear expectations for behavior in course syllabus and discuss with students the first day of class.

**Step 2** When disruptive behavior causes you or other students concern, ask the student to remain after class for a private conversation or schedule a meeting. Do not meet with the student alone if you have concerns for your safety. If a meeting cannot be arranged in person,

communicate by phone, email or letter to reach the student before the next class session. If the behavior causes you serious concern, you may inform the student they cannot return to class until he/she has met with you to discuss the concerns. It is important to report these concerns to your department head, college dean, dean of students or public safety.

**Step 3** During your meeting, discuss the disruptive behavior, clarify your expectations, ask for cooperation in adhering to class standards, and outline possible consequences if the disruptive behavior continues.

**Step 4** Make a record of any meetings or conversations and send written communication to the student summarizing the discussion.

You are encouraged to involve your department head, supervisor or the Dean of Students when meeting with a student to discuss seriously disruptive behavior. The involvement of others will serve to reinforce the importance of your standards, add other perspectives and help keep the conversation focused on behaviors rather than personalities. If you need immediate assistance in responding to a threat to your safety, or the safety of others, call UNI Police Emergency at 273-4000 or 9-1-1.

## Responding to Threats/De-escalating a Situation

**Myth:** Violent perpetrators just snap.

**Fact:** Almost all violent perpetrators will give some indication of violent intentions long before they act.

### Understanding threatening behavior

- All threats must be taken seriously.
- Threats which are ignored provide the perpetrator with the feeling they are not being taken seriously.

### Hints to de-escalate conflict with individuals

- Take a deep breath and relax.
- Look the other person in the eye.
- Both either sit or stand when communicating.
- Speak slowly and softly.
- Keep your arms and legs uncrossed.
- Remember to look for win-win results.
- Paraphrase what the other person has said.
- Give “I” messages.

Watch your language; try not to use words that tend to escalate conflict, such as never, always, unless, can't, won't or don't.

Use words that tend to de-escalate, such as maybe, perhaps, what if or seems like.

Ask questions to encourage them to look at solutions.

Ask open-ended questions.

### **Your safety**

- Never place yourself in a situation where you are dealing with a potentially dangerous person alone.
- Always make plans to have additional persons in the meeting or in the area to assist if necessary.
- Anytime you feel personally threatened, stop the interaction and leave.

## **Missing Student and Emergency Contact Information**

The university requests emergency contact information from students residing in the university-owned residence system. This information is kept confidential and used only by authorized university personnel in the event a student is believed to be missing.

If you believe a student may be missing, immediately report this information to UNI Police or the Dean of Students Office. All reports of missing students will be investigated and given priority. If the investigation determines the student is missing more than 24 hours, the university will, within the next 24 hours, notify the student's emergency contact. If the student is under the age of 18, the university will notify the student's parent or guardian. UNI Police will also make notifications to the appropriate law enforcement agencies and others as necessary.

# Suicide Concerns: What You Can Do

Suicide is often cited as the second leading cause of death among college students, with more than 1,000 students dying each year in the U.S. Most people who kill themselves believe that suicide is the *only* solution to unbearable feelings or problems; they have a sense of hopelessness. Their intense emotional distress may blind them to the alternative solutions available to them. Factors that increase the risk of suicide include a history of mental illness such as depression or bipolar disorder, alcohol or drug abuse, development of a suicide plan and possession of means to carry out the plan, and a personal or family history of suicide attempts.

- **Stay calm.** Take the time to listen carefully to the person.
- **Express your concern and support.** “I’m worried about....” “You’re not alone. There’s help available.”
- **Talk about it directly.**
  - Have you thought about hurting yourself?
  - If yes, have you thought about how you would hurt yourself?
  - Have you tried to hurt yourself before? How? When?
  - Do you have the means to harm yourself?
  - Be clear about your moral or legal obligation to report your concerns to university officials who can provide help.
  - Don’t debate, lecture or argue with the person. That may add to the person’s guilt or bad feelings.
- **Keep the person safe.** Don’t leave them alone until you believe they will be safe.
- **Get professional assistance.** If danger is imminent, call UNI Police Emergency at 273-4000 or 9-1-1 for help.

### Professional Resources:

UNI Counseling Center .....	273-2676
UNI Police .....	273-2712
Foundation2 Statewide Crisis Line.....	800-332-4224
National Suicide Hotline.....	800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

- **Don’t try to deal with a dangerous or potentially dangerous person alone.** Contact UNI Police for assistance.
- **Don’t ignore warning signs.** At least 70 percent of people who try to kill themselves give some sort of signal about their intentions. Examples of such actions or statements include, but are not limited to:
  - Giving away possessions or “tying up loose ends.”
  - Lack of interest in activities, appearance or friends.
  - “Life isn’t worth living.”
  - “Nobody cares.”

- Thoughts and feelings may include: can't stop the pain, can't think clearly, can't make decisions, can't see any way out, can't sleep, eat or work, can't get out of depression, can't make the sadness go away, can't see a future without pain, can't see themselves as worthwhile, can't get anyone's attention, can't seem to get control.

## **Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct**

### **Violence Intervention Services, Wellness Recreation Center, Room 101**

Violence Intervention Services provides an array of advocacy services for victims of sexual assault, physical/emotional abuse, stalking and harassment. All Violence Intervention services are confidential and free of charge. For further information refer to the website at [www.uni.edu/violenceservices](http://www.uni.edu/violenceservices) or call 319-273-2137.

### **Student Sexual Misconduct Policy (for full policy visit: [www.uni.edu/policies/315](http://www.uni.edu/policies/315))**

The university prohibits sexual misconduct in any form. Sexual misconduct is a broad term encompassing any unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or by force, intimidation, coercion or manipulation. Sexual misconduct can occur between persons of the same or different sex. For the purposes of the Student Sexual Misconduct Policy, consent is defined as a freely and affirmatively communicated willingness to participate in sexual activity, expressed either by words or clear, unambiguous actions.

### **Good Samaritan Provision of the Student Conduct Code**

The university will not pursue disciplinary action for improper use of alcohol or other drugs against an alleged victim of sexual misconduct or against another student who shares information as either a witness to or as a reporter of sexual misconduct as long as the report is made in good faith. See "Good Samaritan Provision" Article III (4) of the Student Conduct Code.

### **Confidential Resources**

The University of Northern Iowa will make every effort to safeguard the identities of students who seek help and/or report sexual misconduct. While steps are taken to protect the privacy of victims, the university may need to investigate an incident and take action once an allegation is known, whether or not the student chooses to pursue a complaint.

The following individuals are designated as confidential resources; will seek to maintain all information received as private; and will not share confidential information with university officials or others, unless required to do so by law:

- A sexual assault advocate, including an advocate from the UNI Office of Violence Intervention Services and/or an advocate from Seeds of Hope (a community victim services provider)
- A licensed psychologist or certified mental health counselor, including counselors at the UNI Counseling Center
- A health care provider, including physicians and other medical professionals at the Student Health Clinic
- A religious adviser or clergy member

**If You or Someone You Know May Be A Victim of Sexual Misconduct:**

If you or someone you know may be a victim of sexual misconduct, sexual assault, or any other behaviors prohibited under the Student Sexual Misconduct Policy, you are strongly encouraged to seek immediate assistance from **Violence Intervention Services, Wellness Recreation Center, Room 101, 319-273-2137** or **UNI Police, Gilchrist Hall, Room 30, 319-273-2712**. Students will be provided counseling and medical referrals; assistance with safe housing and academic and financial concerns related to the sexual misconduct; and information concerning victim's rights. Individuals will also be provided information concerning university, civil and criminal complaints, including how to file such complaints.

**Additional Community Resource:**

**Seeds of Hope, 2055 Kimball Ave, Suite 355, Waterloo, IA 50702  
888-746-4673 (24-hour crisis line) or 319-272-1400**

Seeds of Hope is a community agency that provides comprehensive advocacy services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Services will be made available to students free of charge.

## Disclosure of Information about Student

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), it is permissible for faculty and staff to report concerns about students to department heads, college deans, administrators, the student health clinic, the counseling center, public safety, the dean of students, etc.

Because of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), state laws regarding mental health, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, some departments that provide special services on campus may be restricted from revealing treatment records or other protected health information without the student's permission.

# Safety from Natural Disasters and Other Hazards

The University of Northern Iowa has a comprehensive plan to address natural disasters, fires, hazardous materials and many other safety concerns on campus. In-depth information on emergency shelters, campus building evacuation routes, fire safety and other safety topics available at [www.vpaf.uni.edu/ehso](http://www.vpaf.uni.edu/ehso).

## UNI Safety Consultants

Safety Officer .....	273-3189
Safety Manager.....	273-7269
Radiation Safety Officer .....	273-3445
Environmental Safety Specialist .....	273-3445
Fire and Safety Specialist .....	273-2004

## Threat Assessment Team

UNI Police .....	273-2712
Academic Affairs/Assoc. Provost for Faculty Affairs.....	273-2519
Compliance and Equity Management .....	273-2846
Counseling Center.....	273-2676
Dean of Students.....	273-2332
Department of Residence.....	273-2333
Enterprise Risk Management.....	273-3526
Human Resource Services.....	273-2422
University Counsel.....	273-3241
University Relations .....	273-2761

## UNI Alert

UNI Alert notifies the campus community of emergencies or threats to physical safety in situations such as tornados/severe weather, violence, hazardous materials incident, etc. Notification is through phone (landline and cell), email and text messages. Faculty, staff and students should update their personal contact information (through MyUNiverse) to ensure that timely and accurate notification can be made. External speakers with sirens and voice messaging are used for outdoor communication.

More information can be found at [www.uni.edu/alert](http://www.uni.edu/alert).

