

Florida A&M University Assessment & Care Team (ACT)

Mission

Florida A&M University's (FAMU) Assessment and Care Team (ACT) is a group of qualified and dedicated college professionals with a shared mission that includes:

- ❖ Balancing the individual needs of the student with those of the greater campus community
- ❖ Providing a structured method for addressing student behaviors that impact the college community and may involve mental health and/or safety issues
- ❖ Managing each case individually
- ❖ Initiating appropriate interventions without resorting to punitive measures
- ❖ Eliminating "fragmented care"

Overview

FAMU is concerned about the safety, health, and well-being of all of its students, faculty, and staff. ACT was created to identify, investigate, assess, refer, monitor and take action in response to behaviors exhibited by FAMU students that may pose a threat to the college community. Many times students do not ask for help when they need it. As a result it is imperative that college employees and students learn to identify and refer students in mental distress.

When a referral is submitted to ACT, the team will assess the situation and make recommendations for action. Such actions may range from a counseling or academic support referral to removing the student from the college community in accordance with Florida A&M University regulations. ACT will try to work with students, who are deemed not high risk, to refer them to campus resources that will allow them to remain in good standing at FAMU.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding a student of concern or ACT, please email act@famuedu or call the Office of the Dean of Students at 850-599-3541.

Reportable Behaviors

There are three categories of student behavior that ACT addresses:

- ❖ Behaviors of self-harm, suicidal thoughts, ideations or attempts
- ❖ Erratic behavior (including online activities) that disrupt the mission and/or normal proceedings of students, faculty, or staff
- ❖ Behavior that may compromise the health and safety of students, staff, faculty, or the general college community

*The following are **examples** of behaviors that should be reported:*

- Emotional outbursts (yelling, screaming or anger management issues)
- Verbal or written threats of any nature
- Intimidating or harassing others including disturbing or threatening phone calls, text messages, emails, social network posting, etc...
- Disruptive behavior on campus (including in classrooms)
- Concerns of physical abuse including self-mutilation and harm
- Concerns of intimate relationship violence, family violence and/or spousal abuse
- Transportation to the hospital for alcohol and drug use/abuse
- Material, written or spoken, in coursework suggesting possibly self-harm or harm to others
- Written or verbal expressions of suicidal thoughts, ideations or actions

Tips for Recognizing Students in Distress

The “D” scale is a way to measure and assess mental health related risks.

Distress- *A student in distress is characterized by the following traits:*

- ❖ *Emotionally troubled (e.g. depressed, agitated, unstable).*
- ❖ *Individuals impacted by actual/perceived situation stressors and traumatic events.*

You may observe these behaviors:

- ❖ Changes in academic performances in the classroom
- ❖ Scores for examinations significantly drop
- ❖ Changes in pattern of interaction
- ❖ Changes in physical appearance
- ❖ Problems concentrating, remembering things or making decisions

Disturbance- *The student has increasingly disruptive behaviors*

You may observe these behaviors:

- ❖ Repeating requests for special consideration
- ❖ New or regularly occurring behavior, which pushes the limit and may interfere with class management or be disruptive to other students or college employers
- ❖ Unusual or exaggerated emotional responses (ex: venting, screaming, swearing)
- ❖ Persistent sadness or unexplained crying
- ❖ High levels of irritability or inappropriate excitement
- ❖ Any substance misuse and abuse

Dysregulation- *The student is deficient in skills that regulate emotion, cognition, self, behavior, and relationships.*

You may observe these behaviors:

- ❖ Statements related to death, dying or feelings of hopelessness
- ❖ Threats of harming self or others
- ❖ Behavior that is highly disturbed
- ❖ Outbursts of anger
- ❖ Inability to communicate easily
- ❖ Irrational conversation or speech that seems disconnected
- ❖ Loss of contact with reality; such as seeing or hearing things that are not there, beliefs or actions at odds with reality
- ❖ Suspiciousness, irrational feelings or persecution
- ❖ Intimidation through verbal or nonverbal threatening behavior
- ❖ Destructive, harmful or threatening behaviors/attitudes towards others

Warning Signs of Suicidal Behavior

Expression to kill self or wishing to be dead

Presence of a plan to harm self

Means are available to harm self

High stress due to academic difficulty, grief, illness

Depressive symptoms present (e.g. severe hopelessness,
loss of interest, changes in hygiene)

What You Can Do To Help

Responses to Distressed and Disturbed Behaviors

- ❖ Observe: Pay close attention to direct communication as well as implied feelings
- ❖ Initiate contact: If possible, talk to the student privately, be specific and speak in a non-judgmental tone. Openly acknowledge to the student that you are aware of their distress, that you are concerned and are willing to help them explore their alternatives.
- ❖ Clarify your role: A student may see you as a figure of authority and this perception may influence how helpful you can be.
- ❖ Listen objectively and carefully: Try to avoid imposing your own point of view, to withhold advice unless it is requested, and to concentrate on the feelings and thoughts of the person you are trying to help, and not on your own.
- ❖ Know your limits: Only go as far as your expertise, training, and resources allow and trust your feelings when you think an individual's problem is more than you can handle. If you are unsure how to respond to a specific student, consult with the Office of Counseling Services or a member of ACT.

Responses to Dysregulation Behaviors

- ❖ In the event of an emergency, stay calm. If possible, talk to the student in a private place, do not leave the student alone, especially if the student presents a threat to self or others.

Examples of emergency situations include:

- ❖ A suicide attempt, gesture, threat or stated intention
- ❖ A homicidal attempt, gesture, threat or stated intention
- ❖ Behavior posing threat to others
- ❖ Loss of contact with reality
- ❖ If there is an immediate risk of harm to self or others, please call 850-599-3256.
- ❖ If at any time you do not feel safe, please contact the FAMU Department of Campus Safety & Security immediately!
- ❖ If no immediate risk of harm to self or others is present, please fill out the online ACT Incident Reporting form.

How to Make a Referral to ACT

- ❖ Online Incident Reporting Form: www.famu.edu/studentaffairs
- ❖ Contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 850-599-3541

ACT exists to assist students and will handle all referrals professionally in an effort to meet the needs of students and employees.

ACT Committee Members

The following offices are representative on the ACT committee:

- ❖ Office of the Vice President for Students Affairs
- ❖ Office of the Provost
- ❖ Office of the Dean of Students
- ❖ Department of Campus Safety & Security
- ❖ Office of Counseling
- ❖ Student Health Services
- ❖ Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

- ❖ Office of University Housing
- ❖ Office of Equal Opportunity Programs
- ❖ Other departments as needed

Resources

Florida A&M University Resources

- ❖ Campus Safety & Security: 850-599-3256
- ❖ Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs: 850-599-3183
- ❖ Office of the Dean of Students: 850-599-3541
- ❖ Title IX Coordinator: 850-599-3076
- ❖ Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution: 850-599-3541
- ❖ Office of Counseling Services: 850-599-3145
- ❖ Student Health Services: 850-599-3777
- ❖ Center for Disability Access and Resources (CeDAR): 850-599-3180
- ❖ University Ombudsman: 850-412-7907
- ❖ Department of Military and Veteran Affairs: 850-412-5843

Off Campus Resources

- ❖ National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)/<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- ❖ The JED Foundation (Suicide Prevention of College Students): Text START to 741-741 or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)/ www.jedfoundation.org
- ❖ Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)/ <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>
- ❖ Refuge House: 24 Hour Hotline: Leon County 850-681-2111/Madison/Taylor 850-584-8808/Toll-Free 1-800-500-1119/Sexual Assault 1-888-956-7273/ <http://www.refugehouse.com>