FLORIDA AGRICULTURAL and MECHANICAL UNIVERSITY
MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES
RESPONSE PROCEDURES

COUNSELING SERVICES
Division of Student Affairs

I. PURPOSE
To provide all housing staff and student affairs personnel support in dealing with a student in crisis. (These policies are based on those developed by Dr. Jon Brunner at Florida Gulf Coast University. They were adapted by Dr. Yolanda Bogan for FAMU).

II. ACCOUNTABILITY
Policies will be developed under the direction of the Director, Counseling Services, Division of Student Affairs.

III. POLICY
It is the policy of Counseling Services to support all residence life employees, safety personnel, and student services personnel in dealing with a student in crisis. Any registered student at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) who is experiencing a mental health emergency is eligible for these services.

The office of Counseling Services is open Monday-Friday from 8am-5:00 pm. The Counseling Services has extended hours on Thursdays and closes at 7:00. To provide additional counseling support to students and student personnel, counseling staff are available for telephone consultations after-hours for on-campus mental health emergencies involving student safety. A trained victim advocate is utilized for traumas related to victimization. The on-call services are limited to the dates and times in which the residence halls are open to students.

The on-call counselor will conduct a phone assessment, determine what type of additional intervention is warranted and report the disposition to the police dispatcher or referring source. Students who experience mental health emergency/trauma which require an on-site evaluation to determine the student’s safety may need to be transported to Tallahassee Memorial Hospital for evaluation and admission or may need to be served by a trained victim advocate.

Counseling staff will follow-up with all students who request counseling to insure that their mental health needs are being met. Students may need to be referred to community agencies based on the level of care required to meet their mental health needs or other needs.
Procedures for responding to mental health emergencies are designed to meet the needs of the student in crisis and protect the rights of the individual, as well as the university community. Students in crisis need prompt attention, as well as immediate and sometimes extended support. In the event you come into contact with an individual in crisis, the attached guidelines should be followed.

If there are any questions or concerns, staff may contact Counseling Services. We are currently housed in the Sunshine Manor, located between the Black Archives and the Gore Education Complex and across from Tucker Hall. Our phone number is 599-3145. Every month Counseling Services distributes an on-call counselor list so that you will be able to contact a mental health professional when a mental health emergency arises. This list will be distributed to all Residence Life staff, Dean’s Office, and the University Police Office.

IV. PROCEDURES FOR CONTACTING ON-CALL COUNSELING SERVICES COUNSELOR

The following procedure will be followed when an after-hours mental health emergency occurs on the FAMU campus:

1. Counseling Services will provide Residence Life, The Dean of Student Affairs office and the University Police with a monthly schedule of the on-call Counseling Services, their phone numbers and/or pager numbers.

2. To reach the Counseling Services counselor after hours, any of the above areas’ on-call staff may contact the Counseling Services on-call counselor during a mental health emergency.

3. The first call will be to the Counseling Services on-call staff at their designated phone number(s). If for any reason the counselor on-call does not respond a second call can be made to the Director of Counseling Services.

V. MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS SITUATIONS

When a mental health emergency occurs on the FAMU campus, we are concerned first and foremost with the welfare of the individual in crisis, and secondly, with the impact on the community of that crisis. It is important to handle each crisis situation individually and in a low key and contained manner in order to allay anxieties and manage the fallout already inherent in this type of situation. There are generally five types of situations that could constitute mental health crises and they are presented below.

1. Depression:

Depression is often referred to as the “common cold” of mental health. Almost everybody gets depressed at one time or another. Just because students say they are depressed does not mean that they are in crisis. However, it is important to have a sense of how to deal with significantly depressed people.
2. **Suicidal Ideas:**

It is important to realize that many persons who are depressed may think about suicide or even talk about it, but this does not necessarily mean that they will act on these thoughts or that they are experiencing an immediate crisis. However, it is important to maintain contact, let the person know you care, and make a referral to Counseling Services or to other mental health services.

3. **Suicidal Threats and Attempts:**

Suicide threats and attempts are calls for help. Most attempters and threateners do not want to die. Although vague, unplanned thoughts about suicide are generally less lethal than detailed plans, we take all threats seriously. If a student says he/she is going to kill himself/herself, or has made an attempt, **you must get help!**

4. **Uncontrollable Acting Out which puts the Individual and/or Others at Risk:**

This may be the result of a loss of emotional/behavioral control, a psychotic episode, or may be induced by drugs or alcohol.

5. **Victimization such as:**

   **Sexual assault** – Sexual assault occurs when a person is forced to take part in a sexual act against his/her will or without consent. Sexual assault includes incest, rape, and sexual molestation as well as unwanted kissing or fondling. Rape (called “sexual battery” in Florida law) is forced sexual intercourse perpetrated against the will of the victim or without the victim’s consent. It is an act of aggression and power. The victim may be forced to have sex through verbal coercion, threats, physical restraint and/or physical violence, or may have been unable to consent to sexual activity because of physical or mental impairment (including intoxication). The victim may be of any age and either sex. The offender may be a stranger, but in a campus setting is more likely to be a date, friend, acquaintance, authority figure, or family member. When helping victims of sexual assault both medical and emotional needs should be considered.

   **Robbery** - Robbery occurs when a person’s belongings have been taken from their possession without consent. A person may or may not be present when they have been robbed. When present, the robbery likely includes a weapon and the threat or actual physical harm to the victim. Robbery is also an act of aggression and power. Victims of a robbery typically have emotional concerns as well as safety concerns. The level of physical harm often impacts the degree of emotional concerns the victim has experienced.

VI. **PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING**

   A. **Depression:**
If you are working with a student who is depressed, do the following:

1. Be supportive and caring.

2. Support and counsel only to the degree you feel competent.

3. If appropriate, help the student make a plan for seeking counseling or otherwise improving their situation. When a referral is needed,

4. Seek back-up assistance from:
   a. Residence Director
   b. Dean’s Office
   c. Counseling Services staff
   d. Keep in communication with whatever back-up assistance you have established and document student contacts.
   e. Making an early referral to Counseling Services or other mental health professionals is a wise preventative move.

B. Suicidal Ideas:

1. Follow procedures for depression.

2. Make a referral to the Counseling Services office or other mental health professionals. Referrals are made by contacting the Counseling Services office at 599-3145 between 8am-5pm Monday through Friday. The Counseling Services staff will follow-up with the student to offer counseling.

3. All reports of suicidal ideation must be reported. During after duty hours, the on duty clerk will call the University Police Department, Resident Director, and Counseling Services. The clerk will provide the resident’s name, location, and nature of the incident to the aforementioned staff personnel. Time may be crucial; therefore, one must not procrastinate about the next course of action to take to acquire immediate assistance.

C. Suicide Threats:

1. Stay with the person or have someone stay with the person while you contact the University Police department dispatcher at 599-3256. Stay with the person only when you are sure they have no means of inflicting harm to you. If a weapon is involved and immediately accessible to the student, leave the area and monitor from a safe distance, and clear others from the area if necessary. If you can access the weapon without any harm to you, then do so.

2. The dispatcher can dispatch an officer for assistance. If a weapon is involved, then the student needs to be transported to Tallahassee Memorial Hospital for evaluation,
admission or referral. If a weapon is not involved, then the on-call counselor can be contacted for further consultation.

D. Suicide Attempts:

It is important to remember that suicide attempts are medical emergencies first. Follow the procedure below:

1. Do not leave the student alone. Notify the Department of Public Safety at 599-3256. Again, stay with the student only if there is no danger to you. When calling the Department of Public Safety, be sure to provide the call taker:
   a) Your name
   b) Your exact location
   c) The nature of the emergency
   d) The name and condition of the person

2. If it appears that the student’s life is in immediate danger, your first call should be (911). When calling (911), be sure to provide the operator:
   e) Your name
   f) Your exact location
   g) The nature of the emergency
   h) The name and condition of the person

3. The responding officer will notify the on-call Counseling Services counselor after the student has been transported to Tallassee Memorial Hospital.

All information pertaining to a suicide attempt is confidential. The privacy of the student must be guarded. With the student’s consent, parents may be called by the Dean of Student Services or a designate. If the student withholds consent, parents will not be called unless the student’s life is in jeopardy or he/she is underage.

E. Violent Acting-Out Behavior That Puts a Student at Risk to Self or Others:

When a student is acting out in this manner, it is first a safety issue. Follow the procedure below:

1. Call 911 or the Department of Public Safety (x3256). Describe the situation. Be sure to provide the following information:
   a) Your name
   b) Your exact location
   c) The nature of the emergency
   d) The name and condition of the person

2. Call the University Police dispatcher (x3256). Describe the situation. Be sure to give your name and exact location.
3. Get help controlling the student from another RA or appropriate person. You should attempt to intervene and contain the student only if there is no threat to you or the person assisting you. Talk calmly but firmly to the student with the goal of moving with the student to a more secure location, indoors and away from means of harm.

4. If the student is armed and/or you feel unable to safely intervene dial 911 immediately, leave the immediate area and wait at a safe distance for the police. Keep the student in sight.

5. If the responding officer feels a referral is needed for an assessment, the officer can refer the student to Counseling Services for an evaluation.

F. Procedures for Sexual Assault and Rape Cases

Students can get medical treatment from Tallahassee Memorial Medical Center. Counseling and support services are available through trained victim advocates from the Refuge House. The FAMU Police or hospital nurse can call the Refuge House at 681-2111. When not in Leon County, the Refuge House can be contacted toll-free at 1-888-956-7273 so that the on-call Victim Advocate can respond to the scene.

Safety issues

Keeping in mind how important it is not to coerce or pressure a victim of sexual assault, the following steps are recommended if a FAMU student is assaulted:

1. Upon hearing that a student was a victim of a possible sexual assault, it is advised to support and counsel the student to seek assistance. Sometimes victims feel more comfortable first discussing the incident confidentially. In this case, with the student’s consent, call the Counseling Services office at 599-3145 or after hours call the FAMU Victim Advocate. When the FAMU Victim Advocate is not available, call the Refuge House or TPD Victim Advocate. At other times the victim will immediately seek assistance from law enforcement. Again, with their consent, call the University Police and an officer will be dispatched and will follow the sexual assault protocol established by the Refuge House. The FAMU Counselor-on-Call may be contacted to provide additional support.

2. It is important to advise the student to get medical treatment for the following reasons:
   a. To make sure there are no internal injuries.
   b. To rule out and treat for sexually transmitted diseases.
   c. To determine pregnancy and discuss possible alternatives.

3. Even if the student does not wish to make a criminal complaint at the time of the event, the victim should be encouraged to have the rape exam completed. Evidence obtained can be processed under a "Jane Doe" number and retained indefinitely.
There is no statute of limitations on sexual battery in the State of Florida. If the victim later changes his or her mind and wishes to proceed with charges, the results of the medical exam are secure.

1. Advise the student that her/his body is the source of any physical evidence, therefore, they should not perform any hygienic or grooming activities, such as combing hair, brushing teeth, nor should they bathe, douche or change clothing as this may destroy physical evidence.

2. Advise the student that the following procedures will likely take place at the hospital:
   a. A University Police Officer will accompany the victim to Tallahassee Memorial Hospital and either Refuge House or the FAMU Victim Advocate will meet them there to provide further support, answer questions and offer counseling referrals.
   b. Physical evidence will be collected. Because clothing is part of that evidence, it is wise to take along a change of clothing. If the victim has already changed clothes, ask a police officer to collect them.
   c. A complete medical exam will be conducted and blood will be drawn for testing.
   d. The office will conduct an interview and file a report.

Since victims of sexual assault typically feel violated and that control has been taken away, every effort will be made to help the student reassert autonomy and control. One of the ways to support autonomy is to be respectful of privacy and choice. If the student wishes to personally not report the incident to the Police Department, encourage him or her to seek follow-up medical treatment and counseling support. Report the incident (without giving the student’s name) to Counseling Services or the Dean of Students.

Information about sexual assaults reported to Counseling Services or the Vice-President of Student Affairs’ office will be kept confidential unless the victim is less than 18 years of age, when parents or legal guardians must be notified. In order to help insure individual and campus safety, Counseling Services and the Vice-President of Student Affairs’ office will call the University Police to report the incident.

The Campus Security Act requires the notification of the offense to the University Police under Federal Law. The police may not make a victim report without the consent of the victim. It is important that the victim receives a preliminary contact from the University Police in the event that an acquaintance of the RA or Student Service personnel is involved in the allegations. This precludes persons associated with the suspect from steering the student away from reporting the offense.