

## **Behavioral Intervention**

Today, colleges are being faced with the threat of campus violence. As the potential for danger grows, Crowder College is taking steps to prevent tragedy before it occurs.

The best means of protecting college campuses from seemingly random violence is to accept that these acts are not as random as they may seem. If potential "red flag" behaviors can be identified and handled accordingly, dangerous situations may be prevented.

By focusing on specific student behaviors instead of general characteristics, behavioral intervention avoids stigmatizing mental health issues and stereo type-based profiling.

Crowder College's goal is to successfully engage, support, and minimize the concerns associated with students in distress. Accomplishing these goals requires a coordinated institutional response that includes all members of the Crowder College community.

Crowder College employees are to report all incidents of student behavior that are suspicious, aberrant or alarming. Faculty should report behaviors using the SLIPP system. Staff should send an email to the Vice President of Student Affairs describing the behavior, where it occurred and when and provide as much detail as possible.

*According to the Safe School Initiative Final Report by the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education:*

**Incidents of targeted violence at school were rarely sudden impulsive acts.**

**In most campus incidents, the attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused others concern or indicated a need for help.**

## **Types of Behaviors that Must Be Reported**

- Classroom disruption
- Violations of residence hall rules
- Drunkenness in the classroom
- Threatening words or actions
- Writings that convey an intention to harm self or others
- Observed self-injurious behavior (cutting, burning, etc.)
- Threatening online postings in Facebook, MySpace, etc.
- Excessive class absenteeism
- Suicidal tendencies:
  - threats (I'm going to kill myself)
  - gestures(erasing one's hard drive)
  - ideation(I've always thought about killing myself)
  - attempts
- Acts motivated by hatred or discrimination
- Paranoia - student groundlessly believes they are being stalked
- Stalking
- Relationship violence
- Hazing / Bullying
- Flat affect or extreme lack of responsiveness
- "Accidental" overdose

- Disappearances, kidnappings, or missing persons
- Harassment
- Violent fantasy content
- Anger problems
- Non-compliance or other disciplinary matters
- Interest in previous shooting situations
- Victim/martyr self-concept
- Mental health history related to dangerousness
- Speaking or writing that seems bizarre

\*Note: if any employee at Crowder exhibits these behaviors, a report should be filed with Human Resources.

## **Frequently Asked Questions by Faculty and Staff**

### **How should disruptive behavior in the classroom be defined?**

We define 'classroom disruption' as behavior a reasonable person would view as being likely to substantially or repeatedly interfere with the conduct of a class. Examples include repeated, unauthorized use of cell phones in the classroom; persistent speaking without being recognized; or making physical threats.

### **How can disruptive behavior be discouraged?**

Classroom disruption is rare. The likelihood of encountering it can be further minimized by stating reasonable expectations in advance. For example, if you want beepers and cell phones turned off in class, say so in your syllabus, and on the first day of class. Explain the reasons for your classroom expectations, and invite student comments and suggestions. You will find that students are often the strongest supporters of classroom decorum. Most students want to help you create a positive and productive learning environment.

### **How should I respond when classroom disruption occurs?**

Faculty members have broad authority to manage the classroom environment. One court compared teachers to judges, since both teachers and judges focus on relevant issues, set reasonable time limits, assess the quality of ideas and expression, and make sure participants are heard in an orderly manner.

While their ultimate goals may be different, judges and teachers need to exercise authority with compassion and self-restraint. It's best to correct innocent mistakes and minor first offenses gently.

Also, if you believe inappropriate behavior is occurring, consider a general word of caution, rather than warning or embarrassing a particular student (e.g., a good approach is to say 'we have too many private conversations going on at the moment; let's all focus on the same topic').

If the behavior in question is irritating, but not disruptive, try speaking with the student after class. Most students are unaware of distracting habits or mannerisms, and have no intent to be offensive or disruptive.

There may be rare circumstances when it is necessary to speak to a student during class about his or her behavior. Correct the student in a courteous manner, indicating that further discussion can occur after class.

Overall, key factors in responding to apparent disruptive or uncivil behavior are clarity in expectations; courtesy and fairness in responses (making sure students have an opportunity to discuss the incident with you in a timely manner); and progressive discipline, in which students (in less serious cases) are given an opportunity to learn from the consequences of their misbehavior, and to remain in the class.

### **What should I do in the face of persistent disruption?**

Current college policy states that a student who persists in disrupting a class may be directed by the faculty member to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period and can refer the student to the Vice President of Student Affairs Office for judicial action. The student should be told the reason(s) for such action, and be given an opportunity to discuss the matter with the faculty member as soon as practicable. Prompt consultation should also be undertaken with the department chair and written communication with the Vice President of Student Affairs should take place immediately following the removal.

### **When should I call security?**

You should call campus security whenever you believe there is any threat of violence or other unlawful behavior-including a student's refusal to leave a class after being told to do so. Any threat of violence should be taken seriously. Err on the side of caution and notify campus security as soon as you can. If you are at a site, make sure to notify the Campus Director.

### **Should I act immediately or wait for a pattern of misbehavior to occur?**

It's often a mistake to assume disruptive behavior will stop on its own. A fundamental tenet of progressive discipline is to document and respond to "small" incidents sooner rather than later. Generally, teachers who state reasonable expectations early, and enforce them consistently, help students avoid the harsher consequences that flow from more serious infractions later.

### **What confidentiality standards should I follow?**

The College will take appropriate disciplinary action in cases of proven classroom disruption. Consequently, you should discuss allegations against named or identifiable students only with individuals who have some role in the disciplinary process. Examples of people who usually have such a role include your Department Chair, Campus Director and the Vice President of Student Affairs Office. A general rule to keep in mind is that you should refrain from sharing any personally identifiable information from student education records (like grades, or reports of misconduct) with any person (including a colleague) who has no educational interest in the information. If in doubt, confer with the Vice President of Student Affairs.

### **What if a disruptive student claims the disruptive behavior is the result of a disability?**

The fact that a student may have a disability should not inhibit you from notifying appropriate authorities (including campus security, as needed) about disruptive behavior. Students with or without disabilities need to know they must adhere to reasonable behavioral standards. Setting and enforcing such standards may encourage students with disabilities to obtain needed therapy, and to take prescribed medications.

Disability claims and accommodation requests should be discussed with the Coordinator of Disability Services. There is an established procedure students should follow if they have a disability and seek a reasonable accommodation.

Generally, while different rules apply in the elementary and secondary school setting, pertinent federal agencies and the courts have made it clear that an institution of higher education does not have to tolerate or excuse violent, dangerous, or disruptive behavior, especially when that behavior interferes with the educational opportunities of other students. Colleges may discipline a student with a disability for engaging in misconduct if it would impose the same discipline on a student without a disability.

### **What Happens After I Report?**

Once a report is received, a preliminary investigation is conducted by the Behavioral Intervention Team Chair and if necessary by additional members of the College. These individuals will conduct the preliminary investigation for the submitted report and, if appropriate, convene the Behavioral Intervention Team. Individual members of the Team may also be consulted during this initial evaluation.

### **Preliminary Investigation may include:**

1. Review of BIT database and or files.
2. Review of student's disciplinary record with the Vice President of Student Affairs or review of the employee's record under the custody of the chief human resources officer.
3. Interviews to determine the existence of corroborative evidence.
4. Other relevant information as deemed appropriate to ensure the safety of the college community.

### **Actions and Recommendations:**

The Team will receive reports concerning behavior, classroom misbehavior, circumstances of violence, threatening behavior, unwanted pursuit, harassing behavior, etc. In an effort to protect the college community BIT will, by way of the appropriate college official, investigate and respond to reported behavior indicating a student, faculty, staff, or other college community member may pose a risk to self or others. BIT may recommend some of the following:

1. Make recommendations to the appropriate college personnel that may include, but are not limited to actions or sanctions consistent with the Student Handbook, Faculty and Staff Handbooks. In addition, BIT may require individuals to seek professional counseling, make recommendations for filing criminal charges or other actions as deemed appropriate.
2. Assign appropriate college personnel to the subject of the incident for follow-up
3. Recommend that the proper authority notify, within FERPA guidelines, the parents, guardians and/or next of kin
4. Make recommendations to appropriate college personnel regarding conditions of consideration for an individual to return to an active member of the campus community. This may include requiring external psychological evaluations of the individual in question.