

**FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY**  
**AFTER HOURS MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

***COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS)***  
***Office of Student Development Services***  
***Division of Student Affairs***

Revised May 2010

**I. PURPOSE**

To provide members of the university community, especially residence life and student affairs personnel, support in dealing with a student(s) in crisis.

**II. ACCOUNTABILITY**

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

**III. POLICY**

It is the policy of Counseling and Psychological Services to support all staff, faculty and students in dealing with a student in crisis. Any registered student at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) who is experiencing a mental health emergency is eligible for these services.

Procedures for responding to mental health emergencies are designed to meet the needs of the student in crisis; protecting 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 encounter an individual in crisis, the attached guidelines should be followed.

If there are any questions or concerns, please contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). We are located in Howard Hall 239, 590-7950. Every month CAPS distributes an on-call clinician list so that you will be able to contact a mental health professional 24 hours 7 days a week. This list will be distributed to all Residence Life staff, The Vice President of Student Affairs Office, and the University Police Department (UPD). The on-call clinician is an independently licensed mental health professional trained to conduct a psychological assessment and has Baker Act commitment rights.

**IV. PROCEDURES FOR CONTACTING ON-CALL CAPS CLINICIAN**

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

- CAPS will provide Residence Life, the Vice President of Student Affairs Office and the University Police with a monthly schedule of the on-call CAPS staff, their phone numbers.
- To reach the CAPS on-call staff person after hours, the on-call staff from any of the above areas may contact the CAPS on-call staff.

- The first call will be to the CAPS on-call staff listed for the particular calendar date at their designated phone number(s). Please leave a message first on the counselor's home phone and then cell phone. If for any reason the CAPS staff on-call does not respond within 5 to 10 minutes, a second call can be made to any of the other on-call staff listed for the month.
- Many times a consultation with the CAPS Clinician is helpful in evaluating the psychological issue and may result in a more effective and less intrusive intervention. For example, in some case a Baker Act may be avoided.
- It is not necessary for a CAPS clinician to initiate a Baker Act, should it be apparent or imminent. University Police have this authority as well. Please do inform CAPS on any known Baker Acts of FGCU students.
- When you contact the CAPS on-call clinician, you can expect that they will consult with you by phone regarding the situation, making a plan, or other interventions.
- Although the primary role of the CAPS clinician on call is to assist the university staff at the scene, we will speak to students if the situation warrants. However, do not give students staff contact numbers or allow students to call staff at home directly.
- Many CAPS contacts can be handled by phone. However, if at any time the senior administrator on scene wishes the CAPS on-call staff member to come to campus, the CAPS clinician on call will come. The CAPS clinician may decide that after consultation it is best for them to be present to further assess the situation or provide immediate services. It will take between 15 and 30 minutes for most staff members to arrive to the scene on campus.
- In order to provide privacy for the student and reduce disruption to the residential community the student may be escorted, whenever possible and appropriate, to a staff office or the University Police department where the on-call clinician may meet him or her in a safe and private environment.
- If you instruct a student, roommate, friend, or other involved person to follow up with CAPS the next day, please call CAPS and let us know what students to expect and what their relationship is to the incident.
- In situations where the CAPS staff on-call or an administrator on site deems that a student in crisis needs to see a CAPS staff person the next day, please call CAPS main number (voicemail) and inform us that a student in crisis needs an emergency walk-in time that day and we will accommodate that student. The front office person who reviews messages at 8 AM will then be aware of the situation and can work with you or the student to find the best time to come. An administrator or other staff may wish to escort the student to CAPS.
- Whenever appropriate the CAPS clinician will contact the resident Prevention and Wellness Coordinator to assist in an on-campus intervention.

## V. **MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS SITUATIONS**

This section will cover sexual assault, violent-acting-out behavior that puts a student at risk to self or others, suicidal ideas, suicidal threats and suicide attempts.

### A. **Mental Health Emergency: SEXUAL ASSAULT**

#### **What is 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.

#### **Procedures for Sexual Assault and Rape Cases**

**WHAT TO DO IN THE MOMENT (at time of incident):** Keeping in mind how important it is not to coerce or pressure a victim of sexual assault, the following steps are recommended if an FGCU student is assaulted:

1. **Support:** 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. In the case of residence life staff an RA should consult with the RD. Sometimes victims feel more comfortable first discussing the incident confidentially. In this case, with the student's consent, call the CAPS office at 590-7950 or after hours call the on-call CAPS staff. At other times, the victim will immediately seek assistance from law enforcement. With the student's consent, call the University Police and an officer will be dispatched. If needed, the on-call CAPS staff may be called to provide further support.
2. **Medical Treatment:** 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 rule out and treat for a possible unwanted pregnancy.

Students can get free medical treatment from ACT (Abuse Counseling and Treatment, Inc.) staff at the Rape Trauma Center, 239-939-3112, or a physician of their choosing. (FGCU Student Health Center will provide medical treatment at cost during their business hours, but does not administer rape exams, which are discussed below.) The victim can obtain financial assistance through the Victim/Witness Advocate Program, and

should contact the University Police Department for more information. If they do not follow through with the Victim Advocate they may be billed for services, especially from a private physician. If a student wishes to seek counseling or support services, these are available free through the CAPS or ACT.

3. **Rape Exam:** 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 at the Rape Trauma Center. Evidence obtained can be processed under a "Jane Doe" number and retained for 90 days. The statute of limitations on a sexual battery with no enhancements, or exceptions to the rule, is 3 years. If the victim later changes their mind and wishes to proceed with charges, the results of the medical exam are secure for 90 days.
  - a. Advise the student that her/his body is the source of any physical evidence, combing hair, brushing teeth, nor should they bathe, douche or change clothing as this may destroy physical evidence.
  - b. Advise the student that the following procedures will likely take place at the Rape Trauma Center during the exam:
    - 1) A University Police Officer may accompany the student to the Rape Trauma Center, or a student can make his or her own transportation arrangements. ACT staff will meet them there to provide further support, answer questions and offer counseling referrals.
    - 2) 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. This is done for chain of evidence needed for possible future prosecution.
    - 3) A complete medical exam will be conducted and blood will be drawn for testing.
    - 4) ACT staff will conduct an interview and file a report, if the student wishes. If they do not want to file a report, ACT staff will not conduct an interview and only a basic incident report will be filed.

**WHAT IF STUDENT REFUSES HELP:** 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 respectful of privacy and choice. If the student wishes not to report the incident, encourage them to seek follow-up medical treatment and counseling support.

**WHAT TO DO AFTERWARDS (follow-up):** Report the incident (without giving the student's name; unless the student gives permission) to the CAPS office. Information about sexual assaults reported to CAPS will be kept confidential unless the victim is less than 18 years of age, when parents or legal guardians must be notified.

The incident may also be reported by email to UPD. The police may not make a victim report without the consent of the victim. However, in the event that an acquaintance of the RA, Residence Life or Student Affairs personnel is involved in the allegations, it is important that this staff person request another staff person to be present, or contact a supervisor. This precludes persons associated with the suspect from steering the student away from reporting the offense.

## **B. Mental Health Emergency: POTENTIALLY VIOLENT ACTING-OUT BEHAVIOR that puts a student at risk to self or others**

### **What is potentially violent acting-out behavior?**

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

### **Procedures for potentially violent acting-out behavior:**

**WHAT TO DO IN THE MOMENT (at time of incident):** When a student is acting out in this manner, it is first a safety issue. Follow the procedure below:

1. **Police:** Call the University Police dispatcher (590-1911). Describe the situation. Be sure to give your name and exact location.
2. **Additional staff:** Get help assisting in the situation from other staff; in the case of residence life staff another RA, RD or appropriate person. In other campus locations ask loudly and clearly for assistance or direct someone nearby to contact UPD. You should attempt to intervene only if there is no threat to you or the person assisting you.
3. **What to do with the student:** Talk calmly but firmly to the student with the goal of moving with the student to a more secure location, perhaps indoors, and away from means of harm.
4. **If your safety is in danger:** If the student is armed or you feel unable to safely intervene, leave the immediate area and wait at a safe distance for the police. Keep the student in sight.
5. **Other assistance, if needed:** Students who are combative should be dealt with by UPD and escorted to the station. If the responding officer feels an assessment is needed, the on-call CAPS staff will be called.

**WHAT IF STUDENT REFUSES HELP:** If there is a danger of harm to student or to others based on his/her current state, this supersedes the student's right to refuse help. If you become aware of potentially violent situations, inform the student that you are obligated to seek assistance and then follow the steps above.

**WHAT TO DO AFTERWARDS (follow-up):** If other students/staff are involved in the incident, follow-up with them to see if they have any questions or need services, such as from CAPS or medical treatment. Follow-up appropriately in terms of any requirements to report/document the incident, depending on your department's procedures.

## **C. Mental Health Emergency: SUICIDAL IDEATION**

### **What are Suicidal Ideas?**

People who are depressed or experiencing other emotional distress may think or talk about suicide, but this does not mean that they will act on their thoughts. However, it is important and necessary to let the student know your concern and to maintain contact. Making an early referral to CAPS or other mental health professionals is a wise preventative move.

## Procedures for Suicidal Ideas:

### **WHAT TO DO IN THE MOMENT (at the time of incident):**

1. **Your reaction:** Be supportive and caring.
2. **Offer your help:** Support and counsel only to the degree you feel competent.
3. **Make a plan:** If appropriate, help the student make a plan for seeking counseling or otherwise improving their situation.
4. **Get assistance:** Seek back-up assistance from:
  - a. Supervisory staff
  - b. Resident Director (RD) if you are a Resident Advisor (RA)
  - c. CAPS staff
  - d. Keep in communication with whatever back-up assistance you have established and document student contacts.

**WHAT IF STUDENT REFUSES HELP:** If there is no danger of harm to the student or to others based on his/her current state, it is advisable to respect the student wishes but continue to maintain contact within limits of acceptance and comfort. Continued attempts at ensuring the students health are appropriate. Keep in contact with your back-up assistance for further planning. If you become aware of the escalation of intensity, intent or potential for violence to self or others, inform the student that you are obligated to seek assistance and make report.

**WHAT TO DO AFTERWARDS (follow-up):** All reports of suicidal ideation should be taken seriously. RAs should consult with the Resident Director and make a decision concerning further steps. The RD or staff can consult with CAPS. If appropriate, staff may report the incident to the Dean of Students Office for follow-up.

## D. Mental Health Emergency: SUICIDAL THREATS

### **What are Suicidal Threats?**

A suicidal threat implies intent of action and goes beyond thoughts. Threats involve plans and in some cases people will express their intention.

### **Procedures for Suicidal Threats:**

#### **WHAT TO DO IN THE MOMENT (at the time of the incident):**

1. **Stay there, if it is safe for you:** Stay with the person or have someone stay with the person while you get help. Stay with the person only when you are sure they have no means of inflicting harm to you. If a weapon is involved, leave the area and monitor from a safe distance, and clear others from the area if necessary.
2. **Contact University Police:** While you are with the person, contact UPD at 590-1911. If you have to leave the person because it was not safe for you, you should still contact UPD to report the incident. Wait for UPD to arrive.
3. **Additional Assistance:** An officer or an RD will contact the on-call CAPS staff if appropriate, e.g., if the student is not transported for involuntary mental health assessment and there is needs to further assess the student.

**WHAT IF STUDENT REFUSES HELP:** If there is a danger of harm to the student or to others based on his/her current state, this supersedes the student's right to refuse help. If you become aware of potentially violent situations, inform the student that you are obligated to seek assistance and then follow the steps above.

**WHAT TO DO AFTERWARDS (follow-up):** All reports of suicidal threat must be reported. RAs should consult with the Resident Director and make a decision concerning appropriate action. The RD or other staff will contact the CAPS staff, as necessary, to respond to other residents or staff who needs support in response to the situation. University staff should report the incident to the Dean of Students Office for follow-up.

## **E. Mental Health Emergency: SUICIDE ATTEMPTS**

### **What are Suicide Attempts?**

Beyond thoughts and threats, a suicidal attempt is an action a person has taken in attempt to take their life, e.g. overdosing on medications.

### **Procedures for Suicide Attempts:**

**WHAT TO DO IN THE MOMENT (at the time of the incident):** It is important to remember that suicide attempts are medical emergencies first. Follow the procedure below:

1. **Stay there, if it is safe for you:** Do not leave the student alone. Get someone to help you. Again, stay with the student only if there is no danger to you.
2. **Call for help if immediate danger:** If it appears that the student's life is in immediate danger, your first call should be 590-1911. When calling 590-1911, be sure to give the university dispatcher:
  - a. Your name
  - b. Your exact location
  - c. The nature of the emergency
  - d. The name and condition of the person
3. **Wait for help to arrive:** The responding officer will notify the on-call CAPS staff if appropriate.
4. When OHRL, the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Dean of Students, and/or CAPS are called to intervene in a suicide attempt, the student's right to have this information kept confidential is superseded by the danger to the student. A senior administrator will be designated to relay information about the student's condition and location to the parent or emergency contact as soon as possible. When possible, the student should be notified that such a contact is being made.

**WHAT IF STUDENT REFUSES HELP:** If there is a danger of harm to the health of a student or to others based on his/her current state, this supersedes the student's right to refuse help. If you become aware of potential emergency situation, inform the student that you are obligated to seek assistance and then follow the steps above.

**WHAT TO DO AFTERWARDS (follow-up):** All reports of suicide attempts must be reported. RAs should consult with the Resident Director and make a decision concerning appropriate action. The RD or other staff will contact the CAPS staff as necessary to respond to other residents or staff who need support in response to the situation. University staff should report the incident to the Dean of Students Office for follow-up of the University Suicide Intervention Policy. If OHRL, the VP of Student Affairs, or the Dean of Students becomes aware that a student was hospitalized after a suicide attempt, a parent or the emergency contact will be notified by a designated senior administrator.

## **F. Mental Health Emergency: SERIOUS STUDENT INJURY OR DEATH**

*It is assumed that in case of serious injury or death that the University Police (UPD) and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) have been notified or are on scene and all appropriate actions and procedures have been followed.*

### **What are Serious Injury or Death Incidents?**

If a student is seriously injured or found deceased on campus there will be significant disruption in the university community.

### **Procedures for Serious Injury or Death:**

**WHAT TO DO IN THE MOMENT (at the time of the incident):** It is important to remember that people respond differently to support and information regarding the incident or death. Follow the procedure below:

1. **Your reaction:** Be supportive and caring to all affected students and staff.
2. **Offer your help:** Support and counsel only to the degree you feel comfortable and competent.
3. **Get assistance:** Seek back-up assistance from:
  - a. Supervising staff/ Colleagues
  - b. Resident Director (RD) if you are a Resident Advisor (RA)
  - c. CAPS Staff
  - d. Keep in communication with whatever back-up assistance you have established and document student contacts.

### **WHAT TO DO AFTERWARDS (follow-up):**

1. Be sure that you are O.K. Seek assistance and support from others as needed.
2. Seek professional help for yourself and others who find that they are significantly emotionally affected and experience a disruption in their day to day functioning.
3. Follow-up with others for a period of time as many people are impacted much later following the event.