

# HELP IS HERE

## Suicide is a health issue. Mental wellness is important.

### KNOW THE SIGNS

Suicidal Thoughts · Anger · Trapped  
Recklessness · Purposelessness  
Withdrawal · Mood Changes  
Substance Abuse · Hopelessness · Anxiety

### DEALING WITH DISTRESSED, DISTURBED OR THREATENING STUDENT WRITING

Writing can be a helpful, cathartic expression and is not necessarily cause for concern. Use your best judgment about whether a student's writing rises to the level where action must be taken and, if so, what action is appropriate. Consider whether this is the first time the student has turned in writing that you are concerned about or if there are multiple indications that cause concern.

Different cultures view and express ideas about anger and violence differently than we might in this country. Sometimes it is helpful to discern how you structure writing assignments and remind students to write only that which they are comfortable sharing. As faculty, you are the first line of defense in identifying students who may benefit from assistance.

#### Distressed Writing:

The writing conveys information that a student is coping with a personal concern or experiencing a psychological or emotional issue. Distressed writing may cause others to worry about the person's own safety or the safety of others.

- Expressions of hopelessness, depression or anxiety.
- Statements such as "I will never find love, happiness or be successful."
- Prose that reflects significant disempowerment or in some way portrays the author as a victim.
- Blatant statements about suicidal ideation, including not wanting to live anymore.
- References to substance abuse and/or reckless or dangerous behavior.
- Disclosure of life circumstances in which support would be helpful, such as homelessness, food insecurity or domestic violence.

#### Disturbed Writing:

May reflect a thought disorder and may or may not be threatening.

- Paranoid content.
- Content that appears delusional or seems "bizarre."

#### Threatening Writing:

References violence to self or others. Generally requires a Student Concern Report.

- Discussion or acquisition of weapons.
- Details concerning a target.
- Fantasy rehearsal of an attack.
- Perseverating over past loss.
- Focus on anger/revenge, with threat to a particular individual.
- Threats to create justice.

#### HOW TO RESPOND

##### DO:

- Speak to the student privately, if you are comfortable doing so, and let them know you are concerned for their welfare.
- Express your concern in genuine, nonjudgmental terms.
- Explain that help is available and that seeking help is a sign of courage rather than weakness.
- Maintain clear and consistent boundaries and expectations.

##### DO NOT:

- Promise confidentiality.
- Judge or criticize.
- Involve yourself beyond your limits.

#### FILING A STUDENT CONCERN REPORT:

If the writing includes any material you believe needs follow-up, please complete a concern report for the Office of Student Affairs.

Visit [www.tri-c.edu/concernreport](http://www.tri-c.edu/concernreport) to  
complete a report.