

Engaging Students in Need

Seventy-one percent of counseling center directors report that more students are coming to college with severe psychological problems and 94% report that these students are creating a growing concern on campus (Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors' Survey, January 2010). The Division of Student Affairs (DSA) is engaged in a comprehensive approach to assist students who may be in need based on emotional and/or mental health issues. DSA is involved in a variety of teams, programs and services that assist to mitigate student behaviors and/or respond to student behaviors of concern. The primary purpose of these efforts is to support the student and connect them with resources to assist them in getting the help they need.

Listed below are examples of some of the initiatives the Division has in place to reach out and assist students in need.

Team approaches

Recognizing the benefits of communication, collaboration, and cooperation among and between University entities, a number of teams have been formed to assist with these processes in order to assist individuals exhibiting concerning behavior.

Special Situations Team

In an effort to enhance already existing processes, and as a means to align Texas A&M University with emerging national standards relative to dealing with troubled and/or at risk faculty, staff, and students, a Special Situations Team has been assembled. The charge of the Special Situations Team is to assess circumstances, enhance communication, and initiate appropriate responses to specific behavioral problems that may involve threats to the safety and security of the University community.

The Special Situations Team meets on a regular basis and can be convened by any member of the team at any time to respond to concerning situations. The Special Situations Team's authority will be derived from the already existing authority of the individuals who comprise it; the team will not be endowed with any additional authority; and the team will not create new policies or rules, rather they will work within existing rules and policies and propose any new rules or policies through existing processes.

The Team applies crossed-threshold threat assessment techniques to reported situations rather than person-specific prediction models. Appropriate actions are taken based on the facts of each particular case. The crossed-threshold threat assessment techniques are similar to what peer institutions with similar teams utilize. Additionally, crossed-threshold assessment is supported by research, while person-specific prediction is not.

The following are members of the Special Situations Team:

- Mr. Jerry Brown, Office of General Counsel
- **Dr. Martha Dannenbaum, Director, Student Health Services**
- **Dr. Maggie Gartner, Executive Director, Student Counseling Service**
- Ms. Melinda Grant, Faculty Representative
- **Dr. Cynthia L. Hernandez, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs**
- Dr. Blanca Lupiani, Dean of Faculties Representative
- **Dr. Kristie Orr, Director, Disability Services**
- Mr. Mike Ragan, Chief, University Police Department
- **Dr. Anne Reber, Dean of Student Life**
- Dr. Anna Satterfield, Director of Employee Support Services
- Mr. Bill Taylor, International Student Services
- **Ms. Christine Thoorsell, Associate Director, Residence Life**

(Bolded names indicate staff in the Division of Student Affairs. All team members have one or more back-up members who also serve on the team.)

Student Behavioral Issues Committee

The Student Behavioral Issues Committee is a smaller committee led by the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. This committee meets on a regular basis to discuss concerning behaviors of students on the Texas A&M campus. The behaviors of students discussed in this committee might or might not reach the level of the Special Situations Team. The purpose of the committee is to enhance communication between each of these units in order to provide a comprehensive approach to assisting students with concerning behavior. All of the members of this committee are also on the Special Situations Team.

Members of the Student Behavioral Issues Committee include:

- Dr. Martha Dannenbaum, Director, Student Health Services**
- Dr. Maggie Gartner, Executive Director, Student Counseling Service**
- Dr. Cynthia Hernandez, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs (Convener)**
- Ms. Chareny Rydl, Director, Residence Life**
- Dr. Kristie Orr, Director, Disability Services**
- Dr. Anne Reber, Dean, Offices of the Dean of Student Life**
- Mr. Mike Ragan, Chief, University Police Department

Critical Incident Response Team

With a university community of approximately 56,000 students on the College Station campus, Texas A&M University and the Division of Student Affairs realize that crises, or critical incidents, will occur and that these crises can have a significant effect on the larger community. Such critical incidents require effective and timely response.

Texas A&M University and the Division of Student Affairs developed a Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT), consisting of university administrators and staff to best respond to these critical incidents. The purpose of CIRT is to provide assistance and support to Texas A&M University students involved in, or impacted by, a critical incident regardless of location.

The University Police Department (UPD) will activate the Critical Incident Response Team when an incident has occurred. CIRT members do not act as first responders; they respond to incidents as representatives from the University assisting the students and their families with immediate concerns. CIRT supports Texas A&M University students facing life threatening or serious situations throughout the year.

The goals of CIRT are:

- To support the University's response to critical incidents involving students, paying attention to the immediate needs of members of the University community.
- To offer guidance and appropriate support to members of the University community, their families, and University caregivers.

CIRT will respond to the following types of incidents:

- Death of a student (on/off campus)
- Ideation/attempted/completed suicide
- Serious injury/illness
- Sexual assault/abuse/violence
- Mental health crisis
- Drug/alcohol overdose
- Contacting students in cases of a family emergency
- Fire/explosion with injuries or significant damage
- Natural disasters
- Airplane/auto/train accidents

The CIRT Team, supervised by the Dean of Student Life, is comprised of professionals in the Division of Student Affairs. Two members are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Team members are invited to serve on the team based on qualifications and experiences. Team members meet weekly and engage in continuous training.

Tell Somebody Campaign - <http://tellsomebody.tamu.edu>

If a member of the University community observes any behavior by another member of the University community that is concerning and that needs to be brought to the attention of the Special Situations Team, individuals are encouraged to go to: <http://tellsomebody.tamu.edu> and provide detailed information through the online report form. The reporting individual has the option of sharing his/her contact information or submitting the report anonymously. Once a report is submitted online, a copy is emailed to the team members for appropriate review and action. Individuals are reminded on this website to contact 9-911 (on-campus) and 911 (off-campus) if the situation is an emergency.

Alternatively individuals may call the following numbers during business hours:

- In reference to student behavior: Offices of the Dean of Student Life, 979-845-3113
- In reference to staff behavior: Employee Assistance Program, 979-845-3711
- In reference to faculty behavior: Office of the Dean of Faculties, 979-845-4274

Team members receiving these calls or emails will then triage to the most appropriate unit to handle the situation and/or convene the entire Special Situations Team if necessary. The individuals and offices who receive this information have previously been the contact point for reporting concerning behavior even prior to the creation of the team, and are accustomed to handling these types of reports.

Student Counseling Service (SCS) – <http://scs.tamu.edu>

Each year the SCS serves about 10 – 12% of the Texas A&M student body through direct service. When outreach is included, the SCS reaches about 25% of our students by providing some type of programming. As of September 30 of this year, the SCS has seen 79 students for 85.42 hours of crisis intervention. This represents a slight increase in hours from the number of walk-in crises for the same time period last year which is consistent with the current trend in college counseling centers across the nation. Handling a crisis takes more consultation time, assessment time, follow-up time or all three.

Students come to the SCS for a variety of reasons. Each year the top four reasons students say they need help are the same although the order has changed in the past few years, with Anxiety and Depression now by far the greatest reasons that students seek psychological services. This is also consistent with nation data.

1. Anxiety/Panic Behavior
2. Depression
3. Relationship Issues
4. Choosing /Changing a Major (Identify Career Interests)

HelpLine

With the help of student volunteers, the SCS provides HelpLine, a nationally respected crisis response program. Annually, this telephone crisis line receives approximately 1,000 calls. The amount of time spent on each call has increased each year as well as the number of calls requiring UPD intervention/follow-up. This indicates an increase in severity or seriousness of the calls received. The SCS provides backup to the student volunteers. This person is called when serious suicidal or homicidal ideation is present or when the volunteer needs help responding to the issue(s) the caller is presenting. The telephone number for HelpLine is on the back of every TAMU ID card and this service is a vital part of the University's risk management plan.

QPR Workshops

The SCS initiated a suicide prevention program in the fall of 2004. This program, called QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer), is a campus-wide effort currently led by Ms. Jenny Kenley. Over 6000 faculty, staff, and students have been trained through 500+ programs. Expanded QPR is also offered to special populations on campus who are at greater risk for suicide. The Student Counseling Service at TAMU was one of the first campuses in the nation to implement this program and it is a huge success.

Campus Connect Workshops

Developed by the Syracuse University Counseling Center, Campus Connect is a gatekeeper training program for faculty, staff, and students. The experientially based training is designed to enhance participant's knowledge, awareness, and skills concerning college student suicide. Specifically, "Campus Connect aims to increase participant's knowledge about suicide statistics, risk and protective factors, warning signs, and referral resources; to increase empathic listening skills, communication skills, and the ability to ask individuals if they are thinking about suicide; and to increase self-awareness concerning the potential emotional reactions gatekeepers may experience when interacting with students in crisis."

Depression Screenings – Partnership with Student Health Services

In collaboration with Student Health Services, all students who have an appointment for care at the Student Health Center include a depression screening.

Other SCS Services

- The SCS provides case referral coordinator services to help those with long-term counseling needs and/or insurance issues.
- The SCS provides anger management workshops and individual counseling to students with this issue.
- The SCS offers substance abuse counseling to students as part of its regular services. Two staff members provide this service.
- An SCS staff member coordinates service to our returning veterans, ensuring that their needs are being met.

- Learning Disability screening is provided to assist students who potentially have this diagnosis.
- Crisis intervention services are provided to students whose issues are so severe that they cannot wait a few days for an appointment.
- Consultation is provided to all concerned members of the University community.
- Suicide Awareness Month programming – A Walk for Suicide Awareness – September 21, 2016
- Hosts

Student Assistance Services (SAS) – <http://studentlife.tamu.edu/sas>

SAS is a functional area in the Offices of the Dean of Student Life. The professional staff members of Student Assistance Services are trained to provide Texas A&M University students guidance, resources, and support when dealing with personal struggles, managing crisis situations, and/or handling emergencies. SAS staff assist students with:

- Student absence notifications
- Personal counseling referrals
- Assistance in contacting roommates
- Academic referrals
- Assistance with withdrawing from school
- Assistance in contacting and coordinating family needs
- Extracurricular activity issues

In addition, the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) is coordinated by Student Assistance Services.

Disability Services (DS) – <http://disability.tamu.edu>

Mental health concerns is the third largest category of diagnoses served by Disability Services and the number of mental health diagnoses for students registered with Disability Services has increased from 287 students in the Fall of 2011 to 549 students in the Spring of 2016. This is an increase of 91 percent or almost double in less than 5 years.

Disability Services staff members interact and collaborate with students, faculty, and staff to promote an inclusive environment at Texas A&M University. Students with mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, panic disorder and others may be eligible to receive accommodations in their classes such as testing in a reduced distraction environment, extended testing time, modified attendance, etc.

Communication & Resources

- Email to all students from the Dean of Student Life on suicide prevention resources includes a link to the suicide prevention video <http://scs.tamu.edu/suicideprevention>.

- Concerning Behavior Response Guide distributed to new faculty during new faculty orientation. A .pdf copy of the guide can be found at <http://tellsomebody.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2015-2016-TAMU-ResponseGuide-folder.pdf>.

Other Departments in the Division of Student Affairs

Due to their frontline interactions with students, a number of other departments serve as a resource or referral source for students in need. Professional and student staff in these departments go through training to help identify and assist students in need. These departments include, but are not limited to:

- Residence Life
- Disability Services
- Student Health Services
- Veterans Resource and Support Center
- Academic Success Center (in collaboration with Academic Affairs)
- Multicultural Services