

# Distressed vs Disruptive Students

Support struggling students and learn how to help!

As you engage with students across campus or in the classroom, you may observe signs of distress or experience disruptive behavior. This guide offers compassionate, clear, and consistent strategies to help you respond effectively and supportively.

## DISTRESSED STUDENT

### HOW TO IDENTIFY

- May show physical or emotional signs of stress.
- Emotional outbursts, crying, withdrawal.
- Decline in academic performance.
- May be experiencing personal crisis, mental health, or safety issues.

### WHAT TO DO

- Talk privately if possible.
- Listen, validate feelings, and offer support.
- Refer to Mental Health Services or resources needed.
- Submit a BIT, FYI, or Student Conduct Report in Maxient.
- Follow up with your Dean or supervisor, as needed.

## DISRUPTIVE STUDENT

### HOW TO IDENTIFY

- Interferes with classroom or campus operations.
- Yelling, refusal to comply, harassment.
- Threatening behavior or classroom takeover.
- May require disciplinary intervention for safety and policy reasons.

### WHAT TO DO

- Calmly address behavior in the moment.
- Restate expectations and give clear limits.
- Ask the student to step out for a conversation.
- Document the interaction and submit a Conduct Report in Maxient.



## THREATENING STUDENT

A STUDENT IS THREATENING OR YOU FEEL UNSAFE

- Prioritize your safety and that of others.
- Call Campus Police immediately: 911.
- Remove yourself and others from danger.
- Submit an incident report in Maxient after immediate safety is ensured.

## **REPORTING IN MAXIENT**

**\*ALSO REPORT TO STUDENT AFFAIRS AFTER**

### **How to Report:**

1. Go to MyPortal.
2. Click the Maxient Tile.
3. Select the appropriate form for your report.

### **Your Report Should Include:**

- Names, dates, location.
- Detailed facts and observations (not interpretations).
- Actions you took, if any.
- Avoid biased language (e.g., “manic,” “unhinged”).
- Attach any supporting documentation.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY REMINDER (FERPA RULES)**

- Do **NOT** share incident details with colleagues.
- The Office of Student Affairs cannot share student disciplinary outcomes unless safety concerns apply or the student gives written permission.
- Info is shared on a need-to-know basis only.

## **BEST PRACTICES FOR STAFF**

### **When You See Concerning Behavior**

- Remain calm and model respectful tone.
- Listen non-judgmentally and with empathy.
- De-escalate if possible. Use open body language and a calm tone.
- Call a supervisor or your Dean if needed.
- Set clear boundaries if the behavior becomes disruptive.

### **What to Avoid**

- Don't argue or escalate power struggles.
- Avoid labeling behavior (e.g., “manic,” “crazy”).
- Do not ignore safety concerns, take action.

## **CREATING A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE**

**Build community  
and empathy  
in classrooms.**

**Be proactive—  
check in with students early.**

**Refer to counseling,  
student services,  
and your dean as needed.**

## **QUESTIONS OR NEED SUPPORT?**

Connect with the **Office of Student Affairs (room 2002)** at [studentaffairs@fhda.edu](mailto:studentaffairs@fhda.edu) or call us at **650-949-7241**.