

CONCERNED ABOUT A STUDENT

Counseling and Psychological Services at Mason partners with the Student Support and Advocacy Center <https://ssac.gmu.edu/> to help address student, faculty, staff, and/or parent concerns about students that may raise safety and well-being issues.

When Should I Be Concerned About a Student?

While there is no universally definitive measure to identify a student of concern, there are a few common warning signs that may indicate distress or significant emotional concern in a student:

- Marked nervousness, agitation, or irritability
- Inappropriately aggressive or abrasive behavior
- Excessive procrastination and/or poorly prepared work
- Pattern of infrequent class attendance, little or no work completed
- Apparent depression or lack of energy
- Marked change in personal hygiene
- Withdrawal, indecisiveness and/or confusion
- Comments (written or verbal) that suggest thoughts about harming oneself, or any threats to another person
- Bizarre, alarming statements, or evidence that a student is engaging in dangerous behavior

What Can I Do?

1. Talk to the student:

- Identify the right time and place to avoid interruptions.
- Do NOT promise confidentiality/secrets because depending on what your student discloses you may have to alert professionals to make sure your student and others remain safe.
- Focus on the behaviors, not the person, to minimize your student's sensitivity and defensiveness when hearing feedback about themselves.
- Avoid judgment and keep your opinions private. Remember, your student's behavior reflects their struggle to cope effectively with stress or difficult emotions.
- Listen by speaking softly, not interrupting, maintaining eye contact, reflecting back what you are hearing, clarifying, and being patient.
- Suggest helpful resources
- Reconnect and follow up

2. Consult

We recognize that helping a student in distress can be stressful and even overwhelming. Sometimes, students may require more professional help to adequately address their problems. For that reason, Mason provides a number of resources to support you and to ensure that your student receives the help they need. Continue reading below to learn the proper procedure for reaching out to the appropriate resources for your student.

If you feel there is immediate danger, call 911 or (703) 993-2810 (Mason Police).

If you are concerned about a student but it is not an emergency, please contact the Student Support and Advocacy Center at (703) 993-3686 to make a referral directly, or visit their website at <https://ssac.gmu.edu/request-support-and-make-referrals/>. CAPS is not able to outreach to students, but the Student Support and Advocacy Center can.

CAPS is also available to consult whenever there is a difficult situation; please take advantage of this resource by calling (703) 993-2380 Monday/Tuesday/Thursday/Friday 9am to 4:30pm or Wednesday 12:30pm to 4:30pm. Counselors can provide information on where to obtain assistance and guidance about how to approach the student to help them get the support they need.

Students need to contact CAPS to make an appointment for consultation/counseling services. If you are concerned that a student will be unable to do this, you may walk them into our office to aid them in the first step of making an appointment or call when they are with you so that they can make an appointment at that time. If you have concerns about a student and do not feel they can follow through to help themselves, please contact the Student Support and Advocacy Center, as indicated above.

After Hours Crisis Services:

If you are a faculty or staff member with concerns about a student:

Please call CAPS at 703-993-2380. Between the hours of Monday/Tuesday/Thursday/Friday 9am to 4:30pm, or Wednesday 12:30pm to 4:30pm, the CAPS office will assist you. After normal business hours and on weekends, you will be directed to "press 1" in order to connect ProtoCall with the student in need.

ProtoCall can also provide guidance to faculty or staff on how to support a student in crisis.

If a student is experiencing a medical emergency or is in a life-threatening situation, please contact 911 directly, and clearly state the student's location (on campus or off campus) for an immediate response. Mason police may also be called for assistance at 703-993-2810.

Business hours are subject to change. Please check our website for the most updated hours.