

A Faculty Flowchart for Student Disengagement and Mental Health

Drexel University

Mental health problems in universities have skyrocketed. Professors cannot and should not become counselors and therapists, but they can be early observers of troubling behavior or withdrawal. This document provides guidance to instructors by matching broad situations to the appropriate response.

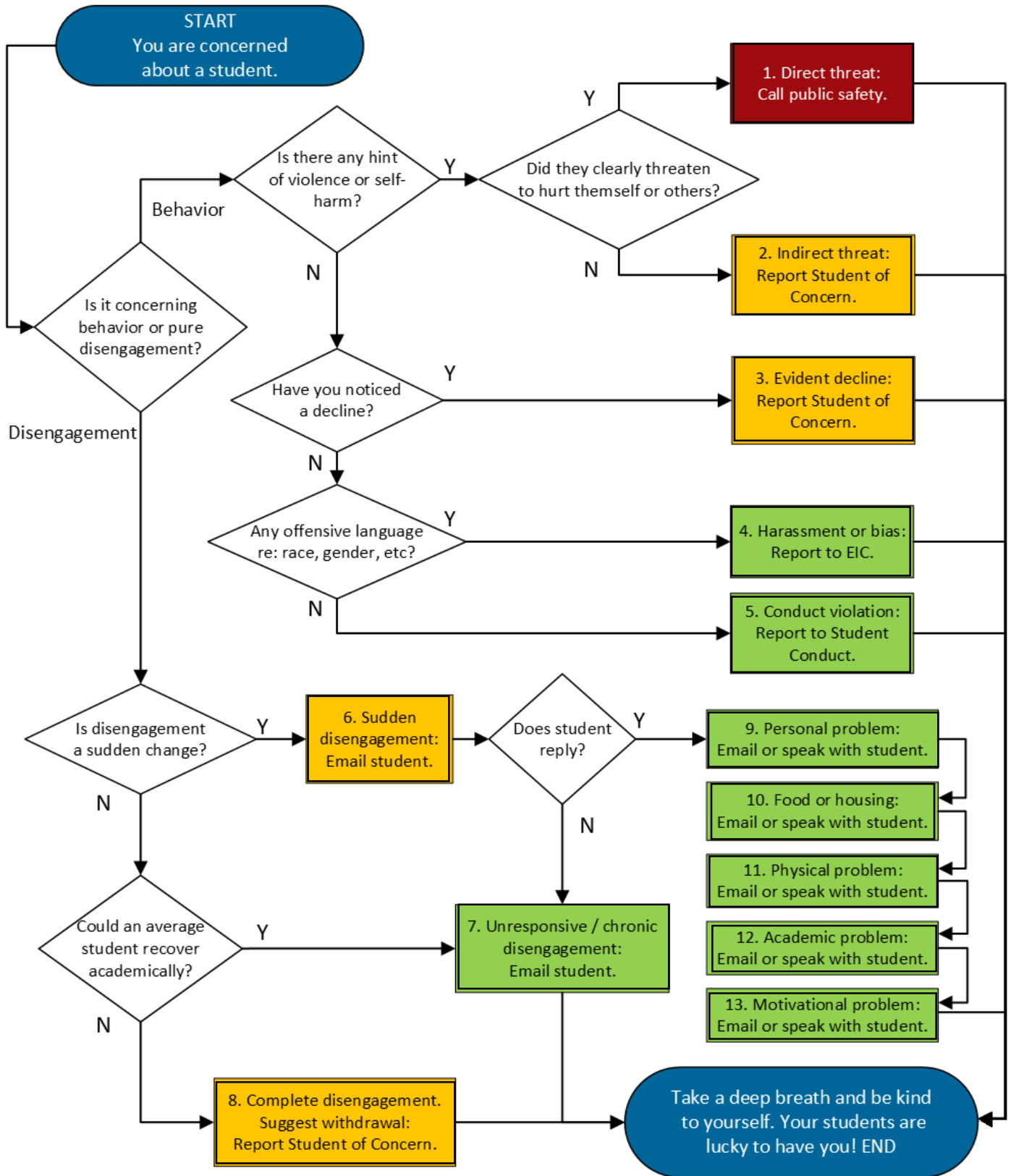
To use the flowchart, follow the decision tree on Page 2. Clicking on the colored boxes will jump down to more information with specific examples, recommended resources, and suggested language for addressing students. The red/yellow/green indicate the probability that the student is in a crisis that requires immediate action from medical professionals and/or police.

All student situations deserve consideration in context, so there may be individual exceptions. Faculty are encouraged to use their best judgement, to treat this document as guidance not policy, and to consult with senior colleagues for specific advice. **Teaching assistants, adjunct, and first-time instructors should consult with the instructor, department head, or a senior colleague as appropriate.**

This flowchart was developed in collaboration with over 40 faculty, students, and staff representing twelve academic departments and eight administrative units. Instructors are also encouraged to use resources for [faculty and staff](#) at the Drexel Counseling Center and resources for [inclusive teaching](#) at the Teaching and Learning Center.

Acknowledgements: We acknowledge helpful input from the following administrative and student support units: Counseling Center, Dean of Students, Office of General Counsel, Provost Office, Public Safety, Teaching and Learning Center, University Advising, and University Communications.

This project was completed by Maureen Tang (College of Engineering) through the Executive Learning in Academic Technology, Engineering, and Science (ELATES) program with funding from the Kern Entrepreneurial Engineering Network (KEEN).



START
You are concerned
about a student.

Is it concerning
behavior or pure
disengagement?

Behavior

Is there any hint
of violence or self-
harm?

Y

Did they clearly threaten
to hurt themselves or others?

Y

**1. Direct threat:
Call public safety.**

N

**2. Indirect threat:
Report Student of
Concern.**

Have you noticed
a decline?

Y

**3. Evident decline:
Report Student of
Concern.**

N

Any offensive language
re: race, gender, etc?

Y

**4. Harassment or bias:
Report to EIC.**

N

**5. Conduct violation:
Report to Student
Conduct.**

Is disengagement
a sudden change?

Y

**6. Sudden
disengagement:
Email student.**

Does student
reply?

Y

**9. Personal problem:
Email or speak with student.**

N

**7. Unresponsive / chronic
disengagement:
Email student.**

**10. Food or housing:
Email or speak with student.**

**11. Physical problem:
Email or speak with student.**

**12. Academic problem:
Email or speak with student.**

**13. Motivational problem:
Email or speak with student.**

Could an average
student recover
academically?

Y

N

**8. Complete disengagement.
Suggest withdrawal:
Report Student of Concern.**

**Take a deep breath and be kind
to yourself. Your students are
lucky to have you! END**

The table rows below correspond to the colored boxes in the flowchart on Page 2. Instructors are encouraged to use their own language to personalize the suggested responses.

#	Situation	Examples	Response action and suggested language
1	Direct threat of harm to self or others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suicide note on exam or homework assignment • “I will kill myself or someone else if I fail this course.” • “I can’t take it anymore; I need to end this.” • Physically unpredictable and/or obviously unwell 	Call Drexel Public Safety, 215-895-2222. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They will advise next steps.
2	Indirect threat to self or others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning in exam with little drawings of bloody knives • “I would be better off dead.” • “They will be sorry they messed with me.” • Menacing or aggressive body language or tone 	<u>Report Student of Concern.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Life will follow up with student and faculty to advise next steps and provide support • In “reasons for report”, choose “self-harm ideation” or “threats to others” from drop-down menu • <i>If appropriate</i>, ask student: “Are you thinking about hurting yourself or someone else?” If they say yes, then “My responsibility is to make sure that students are safe. Let’s call the Counseling Center together and talk about what to do next.” <u>Counseling Center link</u>
3	Evident decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major decline in hygiene • Coming to class intoxicated • Generally erratic behavior 	<u>Report Student of Concern.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Life will follow up with student and faculty to advise next steps and provide support • In “reasons for report”, choose “mental health concern” from drop-down menu
4	Harassment or bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial slur heard in class or written on a board • Inappropriate physical contact • Suspected harassment or discrimination • See list at EIC website 	<u>Report to Equitable and Inclusive Culture.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty are mandatory reporters of discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct • If relevant, address class: “Everyone, I need to talk about something serious. Yesterday, someone [factual description of incident as appropriate]. This is completely unacceptable, and I have reported it following university protocols. If you would like to discuss this with me in more detail, my office hours are XX or by email.”

5	Conduct violation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptive or unruly in class • Personal insults or inappropriate language • See list at Student Conduct website 	Report Student Conduct Incident. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save all written contact and alert department head • If relevant, address class: • “Everyone, I need to talk about something serious. Yesterday, someone [factual description of incident as appropriate]. This is completely unacceptable, and I have reported it following university protocols. If you would like to discuss this with me in more detail, my office hours are XX or by email.”
6	Sudden disengagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student who was active in class discussions misses 3 lectures without notice • Student was submitting assignments, stops completely 	<p>Email student. CC advisor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Dear [student], I noticed that you [haven’t been in class for a while or has not turned in the last few assignments, etc.]. I hope everything is ok. My office hours are XX or by email. I am also cc’ing your advisor to make sure you know that there are many people here who can help. Best, Professor” • To look up advisor, go to DrexelOne → Faculty → Class List → [Course] → [Student]. Advisor’s name will be listed with email address and photo in hyperlink.
7	Unresponsive/ Chronic disengagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student hasn’t replied to attempt(s) to reach out • Student has rarely turned in assignments or come to class, but could probably catch up 	<p>Email student. CC advisor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Dear [student], I hope everything is ok. My office hours are [details] or by email. I am also cc’ing your advisor to make sure you know that there are many people here who can help. If you do not reply, I will assume you do not want my help, which is also ok. Best, Professor” • To look up advisor, go to DrexelOne → Faculty → Class List → [Course] → [Student]. Advisor’s name will be listed with email address and photo in hyperlink.
8	Complete disengagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student has never turned in assignments or come to class, would have to be academically exceptional to catch up. 	<p>Email student suggesting withdrawal. CC advisor and report Student of Concern.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Dear student, I noticed you have not [submitted any assignments this term/attended any classes/etc]. I suggest you withdraw from the course by the deadline this Friday. I am cc’ing your academic advisor and strongly recommend that you meet with them to create a plan for future success. Best, Professor” • To look up advisor, go to DrexelOne → Faculty → Class List → [Course] → [Student]. Advisor’s name will be listed with email address and photo in hyperlink.

9	Personal problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student discloses struggles with mental health, substance abuse, eating disorder, home problems, etc. 	<p>Email or speak to student.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Thank you for sharing with me. I’m glad you’re able to tell me about this. Before you go too much further, I want to make sure that I am the right person for you to have this conversation with. You will get the best support if you talk to a person who has training for this kind of situation and who also is not responsible for assessing your knowledge of [class] like I am. For instance Drexel’s counseling center has these resources: https://drexel.edu/counselingandhealth/counseling-center/overview/ Do you have someone like that right now?” • Depending on response, refer to advisor, Counseling Center, or report Student of Concern • If student discloses discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct, faculty are obligated to report to EIC • To look up advisor, go to DrexelOne → Faculty → Class List → [Course] → [Student]. Advisor’s name will be listed with email address and photo in hyperlink.
10	Food or housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food insecurity, homelessness, basic needs 	<p>Email or speak to student. CC advisor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Thank you for sharing with me. I’m glad you’re able to tell me about this. You will get the best support if you talk to a person who has training for this kind of situation and who also is not responsible for assessing your knowledge of [class] like I am. I am looping in your advisor, who knows how to navigate the best resources for your situation.” • If appropriate, report Student of Concern. Select “Financial Concerns” from drop-down menu • Advisor/Student Life will be able to connect with Housing, Drexel Food Bank, or other resource • To look up advisor, go to DrexelOne → Faculty → Class List → [Course] → [Student]. Advisor’s name will be listed with email address and photo in hyperlink.
11	Physical problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car problems, appendicitis, apartment problems, responsibilities at home 	<p>Decide what accommodations you are willing and able to offer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate accommodations clearly and in writing • If relevant, refer to Office of Disability Resources (e.g. help writing exams with a broken arm). See templates at ODR website • If appropriate (e.g. student will be missing all classes for injury), report Student of Concern

12	Academic problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate training from prerequisite courses, e.g. • “I never saw this material before.” 	<p>Refer to office hours or discipline-specific support at ARC. CC academicsuccess@drexel.edu.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “From what I see, it looks like you have to catch up on [material]. And that means that you will have to spend some extra time working with [resource: MRC, ARC, etc.]. There are also professional academic coaches at Drexel, at CLASS. I would like to refer you to their services. It is going to be tough, but I think you are capable. How does that sound?”
13	Motivational problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interest in major • Debilitating procrastination • Inadequate study skills 	<p>Refer to CLASS. CC academicsuccess@drexel.edu.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “From what I see, it looks like you are capable of doing well but struggling with other things. We have a great service at Drexel called CLASS. It has academic coaches to help students get in control of their situation, find the correct resources, and make a plan to move forward. I’d like to refer you to their services. How does that sound?”