

Responding to Students When you Suspect Substance Abuse

Signs that a student may have an alcohol problem:

- Failure to fulfill major work, school, or home responsibilities.
- Specific school problems such as poor attendance, low grades, and/or recent disciplinary action.
- Drinking in situations that are physically dangerous, such as driving a car.
- Having recurring alcohol-related legal problems, such as being arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or for physically hurting someone while drunk.
- Continued drinking despite having ongoing relationship problems that are caused or worsened by drinking.
- Mood changes such as temper flare-ups, irritability, and defensiveness.
- Physical or mental problems such as memory lapses, poor concentration, bloodshot eyes, lack of coordination, or slurred speech.

Signs that a student may have a drug problem:

- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms (e.g., nausea, restlessness, insomnia, concentration problems, sweating, tremors, anxiety).
- After reducing or stopping chronic drug use taking a drug in order to avoid withdrawal symptoms.
- Spending a lot of time getting, using, and recovering from the effects of a drug.
- Abandoning previously-enjoyed activities, such as hobbies, sports, and socializing, in order to use drugs.
- Neglecting school, work, or family responsibilities.
- Taking risks while high, such as starting a fight or engaging in unprotected sex.
- Continuing to use despite physical problems (e.g., blackouts, flashbacks, infections, injuries) or psychological problems (e.g., mood swings, depression, anxiety, delusions, paranoia) the drug has caused.
- Legal troubles because of drug use, such as arrests for disorderly conduct, driving under the influence, or stealing to support drug habit

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Treat the situation as serious.
- Consult with a counselor at 607-274-3136, if you want to discuss your concerns prior to speaking to the student.
- Share your concern and encourage the student to seek help.
- Recognize that denial is a powerful aspect of substance problems and that it can involve conscious or unconscious lying and distorting the truth.
- Refer the student to the Coordinator of the Health Promotion and Substance Abuse Prevention Program, 607-274-3136; the Counseling Center, 607-274-3136 and/or the Health Center, 607-274-3177.