

SORT

[Student—Observation—Response—Team]

Purpose:

SORT is a 5-person group whose job is to assess student behavior identified as sufficiently erratic/bizarre/unusual where deliberate and expedient intervention may be warranted. The SORT group supports and assists faculty and staff who are experiencing a student behavior problem and seek guidance in handling the concern.

SORT Membership:

Director of Student Development and Campus Life	Sarah Sarber
Director of Safety and Security	David Selby
Coordinator of Student Special Needs Services	Carlos Zapata
Faculty Representative with expertise (trained) in behavioral and mental health	Robert Wildblood
Vice-Chancellor of Student Services	Jack Tharp

Operational Scope:

The role of the team is consultative and advisory. The objectives of a behavioral assessment will be to:

- a) identify the problem
- b) determine if the incident(s) requires immediate attention and by whom [including professional mental health counseling]
- c) recommend if any procedural processes are necessary such as student discipline
- d) present to the faculty (staff) member strategies for dealing with the student and/or behavior, if the assessment is judged to be non-threatening

Initiating a SORT Review:

- 1) Faculty or staff must determine if the “immediate” student conduct rises to the level of an eminent safety concern for oneself, students in the classroom, the student under question [suicide], or general campus community. **Campus Security* is the first response** in matters of urgency. **Call ext. 363 [765-455-9363]**
- 2) If the conduct referenced in item #1 above is temporarily manageable, but faculty or staff believes the behavior warrants assessment, then a request for SORT should be made. The Vice Chancellor of Student Services or designee will schedule a SORT meeting within one working day of the notification. **Call ext. 360 [765-455-9360]**
- 3) The faculty member (staff) requesting assistance will be expected to participate in the review. Any other campus staff that knows the student may also be consulted.
- 4) The SORT group after considering all information presented will recommend a course of action.

**SORT does not abrogate the responsibilities of the Director of Safety and Security.*

SORT Review:

The Sort group will use a model referred to as AISP (assessment intervention of student problems). AISP is premised on collecting all information available and when possible examines student conduct in other spheres in addition to the situation/event under question [ex. are classroom actions congruent or very different from what is observed in other settings].

The AISP model divides students into three general categories:

- the disturbing student
- the disturbed student
- the disturbed and disturbing

More often than not the *disturbing student* is best handled through the Dean of Student’s Office. Concomitantly, a *disturbed student*, where the exhibited behavior(s) suggests there are mental health issues poses a special problem for our campus with limited resources. [Note: the campus has a contract with Howard Regional Health Services, Behavioral Services for personal counseling for students, up to 6 sessions free]

Below is a summary of the AISP model presented in New Directions for Student Services, No. 45, Spring 1989, "Dealing with the Behavioral and Psychological Problems of Students", Ursula Delworth, Ed. In part III, it is obvious the model was posited for a residential campus. The utilization of the Delworth reference is such that it is being updated for re-release in 2008.

I. **The Disturbing Student**

Description: Lacks skills in establishing close, age-appropriate relationships; very self-centered but wants to establish relationships.

Type A: Immature

- Shows immature reactions to many aspects of college life
- Plays pranks
- Does not respect property of others
- Overreacts to minor problems
- May abuse alcohol
- Has low frustration tolerance
- Engages in illegal activities that tend to be overt (for example, disorderly conduct).

Type B: Con Artist

- Wants to manipulate and control
- Tests limits
- Usually can be charming
- Engages in illegal activities that tend to be covert (for example, drug dealing)
- May abuse alcohol or illegal substances or both

II. **The Disturbed Student:**

Description: Specific behaviors and patterns of behavior are out of sync with other students; often marked patterns of moving away from *or* against others; may overly fixate on one goal or idea; may evince overall rigid, highly dualistic thinking; may make inappropriate or off-task remarks; seems angry and destructive toward self or others.

Type A: Inward Focus

- Depressed, withdrawn-perhaps to the point of being suicidal
- Little involvement in classes and campus life

Type B: Outward Focus

- Angry at world and particular persons-perhaps to the point of being homicidal
- May be involved, but with less frequency, with "mainstream" groups.

A-B 1: Symptoms are recent; following known precipitating cause

A-B 2: Symptoms are recent; no known cause

A-B 3: Symptoms are long-standing; no real change

A-B 4: Symptoms are long-standing; worsening after period of better adjustment

A-B 5: Symptoms are long-standing; worsening steadily

III. **The Disturbed/Disturbing Student:**

Description: Any combination of I and II are possible. Some typical combinations:

1. Student is *disturbing* residence-hall and campus security with stories of being attacked in his or her residence hall room every night by an enemy (or any other persistent and illogical complaint), thus evincing *disturbed* behavior.
2. Student is depressed and withdrawn (*disturbed*) except when drinking. Student then picks fights, destroys residence-hall property, and so on (*disturbing*).
3. Student minuses financial aid (*disturbing*) in order to pay for a medical operation on a disorder those physicians cannot verify, thus evincing *disturbed* behavior.
4. Student is *disturbing* residence-hall floor by threatening to commit suicide, following the death of a close relative (*disturbed*).