

DRAFT 8-21-10 Protocol for Department Chairs/Deans

Subject: Faculty/Staff (employee) of Concern for Harm to Self or Others

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The University of Alabama expects and encourages faculty and staff employees to maintain a reasonable concern for their own welfare and the welfare of others. If any employee or student of The University of Alabama becomes concerned about the behavior of another employee as potentially at risk for harm to self or others, he or she shall contact the appropriate department chair or dean and report the concern. However, if an employee or student believes that there is an immediate threat, he or she should contact the University Police Department without delay (205-348-5353).

Potential Harm to Self

In the event that a department chair or dean is presented with a credible report that a faculty or staff employee has threatened or attempted suicide, engaged in efforts to prepare to commit suicide, or expressed a preoccupation with suicide, then the employee will be presumed to be at risk for harm to self and subject to a formal risk assessment (see below).

Potential Harm to Others

In the event that a department chair or dean is presented with a concern about a faculty or staff employee regarding potential harm to others, the department chair or dean shall do the following:

1. If it is determined that potential harm is imminent, the chair or dean should immediately contact the University Police Department (205-348-5353) and report as many details as are available. Keep a phone line open to police. Move yourself and others to safety if possible.

Evidence for Imminent harm includes, but is not limited to the following:

- o Employee brings a weapon onto campus
 - o Employee is actively engaged in assaultive behavior (i.e., threatening to physically attack, attempting to physically harm, or engaged in physical harm of another individual)
 - o Employee has engaged in assaultive behavior (e.g., physically assaulted another individual and left campus)
2. If there is no evidence that harm is imminent, the chair or dean should meet with the individual(s) expressing concerns and attempt to determine the nature of the concern. The chair or dean should make a written record of all available details regarding the concern. If concerns are first brought to the department chairs then chairs shall contact the appropriate Dean who will make a determination regarding potential need for a formal risk assessment, and to determine the next appropriate step to take.

- If the Dean determines the concern does not merit further action, a confidential written record of the concerns will be nonetheless be filed at the department and college level. The individual(s) expressing the concern will be notified that a confidential record has been made and filed with the department chair and dean, but no further action will be taken at this time. The employee of concern will not be notified since the record is not about the individual but about the concern expressed by another employee(s) or student(s).
3. If the Dean determines that the concern is serious enough to merit further screening, the Dean may attempt to conduct an informal risk assessment by meeting with the employee and/or collecting collateral information from co-workers, family members, or students with the purpose of determining whether a referral for a formal risk assessment is necessary. The Dean will carefully consider potential ramifications of interviewing the employee of concern and/or collateral informants, as in some cases doing so may exacerbate the situation. The Dean may consult with the University Police Department, University Counsel, and/or other university officials prior to making the determination that an interview with the employee is appropriate, and under what conditions (e.g., with or without University Police presence). In making a determination regarding the need for a formal risk assessment, the Dean shall consider the whether there is credible evidence* for any of the factors listed below, understanding that other factors not listed below may appropriately be taken into consideration.

*Credible evidence is not proof, but rather includes evidence such as postings from the employee of concern on listservs, websites, or other social networking sites; self-reports from the employee of concern; and/or collateral reports from one or more sources regarding the employee of concern.

Factors to Consider in Determining Need for Formal Risk Assessment:

- Historical Factors:
 - Known history of serious mental illness
 - Known history of legal problems (especially violence-related)
 - Known history of physical fights/violent behavior
- Current Factors:
 - **preoccupation with or daydream/fantasies about suicide/homicide/violence****
 - Preoccupation with or focus on firearms
 - Known to own firearms
 - Significant changes in life circumstances, including recent personal loss, career failure, or disciplinary action
 - Extreme hypersensitivity, hypervigilance, or thoughts that others are “out to get [them]”
 - Persistently blaming or criticizing others
 - Unprovoked outburst of anger or aggression

- Threatening or intimidating behavior directed toward others
 - Substance or alcohol abuse
 - Strained interpersonal relationships
 - Social isolation/lack of support
 - Recent Changes:
 - Uncharacteristically inattentive/unresponsive to coworkers, students, or others
 - Uncharacteristically argumentative or combative
 - Refusal to follow directives, disregard for safety and security policies
 - Deterioration in work performance or attendance
 - Bizarre or outlandish behavior that induces discomfort or fear in others
 - Extreme reactions to typical environmental challenges

****If there is evidence of preoccupation with or daydreams/fantasies about suicide/homicide/violence, the individual is presumed to be at risk for harm to self or others and the Dean shall immediately initiate a formal risk assessment (see below).**
 - None of the other above factors, taken individually, necessarily meet threshold to initiate a formal risk assessment. Further, there is no specific number of factors that must be present to meet threshold for initiating a formal risk assessment, nor is the above considered an exhaustive list of all factors that may be considered. However, if, in the Dean's judgment, a pattern of concerning behavior evidenced by one or more of the above screening factors (or others) suggest reason for further concerns, the individual is presumed to be at risk for harm to self or others and the Dean shall initiate a formal risk assessment (see below).
4. If the Dean determines that a formal risk assessment is not warranted based on the evidence acquired, a confidential written record of the concerns will be nonetheless filed at the department and college level. The individual(s) expressing the concern will be notified that a confidential record has been made and filed with the department chair and dean, and that the situation is being monitored. The Dean shall determine if the employee of concern should be contacted, and by what means, in order to share concerns and suggest possible support mechanisms (e.g., referral to Employee Assistance Program). If additional information becomes available after the initial screening that would indicate further cause for concern, the individual may be rescreened, but likely will be presumed to be at risk for harm to self or others and the Dean shall initiate a formal risk assessment.
 5. If the Dean determines that a formal risk assessment is merited, the Dean shall inform the Provost of this determination. The Dean and the Provost, in consultation with the University Police Department, University Counsel, and/or other university officials, will determine the appropriate mechanism through which to inform the employee that a risk assessment is necessary. In such cases, the employee will be placed on immediate paid medical leave from the point of notification until resolution of the matter. The employee will not be permitted on

campus during this period of time. A formal risk assessment will be conducted by a Certified Forensic Examiner (CFE) contracted through the Office of Academic Affairs. The findings and recommendations of the CFE will be communicated to the employee of concern, identified family members (when appropriate), and the following University officials: Department Chair, Dean, Provost, University Police Department, and University Counsel. This report will be confidential and shared only on a need-to-know basis. Copies of the Risk Assessment report and recommendations will be filed with the department chair, HR, Dean, Provost, and University Police. The Provost will make a determination regarding the resolution of the case. When the case is resolved, the individual(s) expressing the concern will be notified that the situation of concern has been resolved, but no details regarding the findings or resolution of the case will be communicated.

Comment [TMSN1]: We could elaborate further on this if we decide to go in this direction. A dean/provost might not know how to initiate the referral. Also, it may not be obvious what a CFE is (or why we think it is crucial to refer to a CFE). We might include a subparagraph here with specific guidance on how a referral should be made, how to find out who an appropriate CFE would be to refer to, and etc. We might also provide the names and contact information of particular individuals to whom appropriate referrals can be made. At the least, we should include contact information for the people who conduct the CFE training? They might be able to provide a list of appropriate referral sources?

We also might include specific referral language. For instance, the importance of communicating everything already known about the situation, any collateral sources gathered that can be shared with the examiner, and any other "contract" issues that would be relevant.

Is Faculty Member/Staff at risk of harm to self or others?

Yes, imminent harm (has weapon on campus, actively engaged in assaultive behavior, previously engaged in assaultive behavior)

If so, call the UAPD at 348-5454 and move yourself and others to safety

No evidence for imminent harm, but potential harm

If so, Dean (with specific Chair's assistance) should determine if concern merits further action by meeting with concerned individuals and making a written record of all available details regarding concern

Further action required

Collect collateral information

Possibly interview individual of concern

No further action required

File written record of concern, notify individuals who expressed concern. DO NOT notify the employee of concern

Assess for known risk factors (based on list provided and unlisted risk factors)

Formal Risk Assessment is not warranted

File written concerns, monitor situation, and determine whether to contact individual of concern with support recommendations. If additional information becomes available that would indicate further cause for concern, the individual will be further screened, but likely presumed to be at risk for harm to self or others and a formal risk assessment should be initiated

Formal Risk Assessment is merited

Dean shall inform the Provost. They, with other university officials, will inform the employee that a risk assessment is necessary. The employee will be placed on immediate paid medical leave and will not be permitted on campus during this period of time. A formal risk assessment will be conducted by a Certified Forensic Examiner (CFE) contracted through the Office of Academic Affairs. The Provost will make a determination regarding the resolution of the case.