

Q & A ON CLASSROOM SAFETY

Q. What if a disruptive student claims the disruptive behavior is the result of a disability?

A. The fact that a student may have a disability should not inhibit you from notifying appropriate authorities (including the campus police, as needed) about disruptive behavior. Students with or without disabilities need to know they must adhere to reasonable behavioral standards. Setting and enforcing such standards may encourage students with disabilities to obtain an array of services from professionals to meet these behavioral standards.

Student disability claims and accommodation requests should be discussed with the Department of Disability Services (x3460). There is an established procedure students should follow if they have a disability and need to seek a reasonable accommodation.

Generally, while different rules apply in the elementary and secondary school setting, pertinent federal agencies and the courts have made it clear that an institution of higher education does not have to tolerate or excuse violent, dangerous, or disruptive behavior, especially when that behavior interferes with the educational opportunities of other students. Colleges and universities may discipline a student with a disability for engaging in misconduct if it would impose the same discipline on a student without a disability.³

Q. When should I call the police?

A. You should call the MUPD at x4444 or 911 whenever you believe there is any threat of violence or other unlawful behavior, including a student's refusal to leave a class after being told to do so. Any threat of violence should be taken seriously. Err on the side of caution and notify the police as soon as you can. You should also call MUPD at x4444 or 911 if you believe a student is a threat to him/herself.⁴

Q. Should I act immediately or wait for a pattern of misbehavior to occur?

A. It is often a mistake to assume disruptive behavior will stop on its own. A fundamental tenet of progressive discipline is to document and respond to "small" incidents sooner rather than later. Generally, teachers who state reasonable expectations early, and enforce them consistently, help students avoid harsher consequences as a result of more serious infractions later.

Questions?

**Contact the Division of Student Life
(x3417) and/or your Dean, Executive
Director or your Department Chair.**

Guide adapted from Faculty/Staff Emergency Guide: Helping Students in Difficulty, Rutgers Health Services, Rutgers University.

¹ Adapted from the Jed Foundation, Student Mental Health and the Law: A Resource for Institutions of Higher Education. New York, NY: The Jed Foundation, 2008.

² American College Health Association - National College Health Assessment, 2006.

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