GUIDELINES FOR HELPING STUDENTS IN CRISIS
for Bristol Community College Faculty and Staff

This document provides suggestions for intervention and guidelines for helping and supporting students in crisis. Because the term “crisis” carries a degree of subjectivity and connotation, and because a crisis can elicit different reactive responses in people, determining whether a person is experiencing a psychiatric crisis or emergency is challenging. It may be helpful to remember that persons in crisis are not experiencing typical reactions to difficult situations (crying, irritability, sadness, etc.) but are exhibiting life-threatening, desperate, or uncontrollable behavior.

Clinically, a crisis is when one demonstrates imminent danger of harming him/herself or other persons and/or when one experiences psychosis (delusions and hallucinations), rage, terror, or despair. The following responses are for various levels of crisis. Any violent behavior or direct threat of violence should always be reported to Campus Police, ext. 2218 or 3911, or to local police – 911.

It may be helpful to classify behavior in order to assess the level of threat. Here are three possible levels:

1. **Passive Expression of Self Harm**
   Sometimes students may make comments in class (or in writing assignments) that do not actively threaten self-harm but, rather, may express a view that life is not worth living or that they may be ‘better off dead.’ Even if the student does not explicitly threaten to act in a self-injurious way, the Faculty/Staff member may choose to do one of the following:

   A. Encourage the student to talk with a counselor in Counseling Services and offer to help arrange an appointment by calling Counseling Services on the Fall River Campus (ext. 2234 or 2227).

   B. Discuss the situation with a member of Counseling and Health Services in an effort to make an assessment of the student’s state of being and to establish an action plan.

2. **Active Threat of Harm/Imminent Danger to Self or Others**
   Remember that non-clinical faculty/staff members are not expected to make a diagnostic determination of a student’s intent to hurt him/herself or others; however, if a student makes a vigorous, serious, and convincing (verbal or written) statement regarding suicide or homicide while at BCC, notify Campus Police (508-678-2811, ext. 2218 or dial ext. 3911). Campus Police, in consult with Counseling Services, will determine a course of action. If the person making the report does not know the student’s identity, providing a description of physical features and clothing will help to identify/find the student should he/she leave the location.

3. **Non-threatening Disorganization/Disorientation/Psychosis**
   In rare cases, a student may appear to be confused, disorganized, and grossly illogical. Verbal associations may be tangential, loose, or discrete. Delusions or sensory hallucinations may also be evident. Campus Police should be notified. The student may be escorted to Counseling Services where a counselor will assess the student and develop an appropriate action plan.