THE STUDENT WHO IS AGGRESSIVE or POTENTIALLY VIOLENT

Violence due to emotional distress is very rare. It typically occurs only when the student is totally frustrated and feels totally unable to do anything about it. The adage, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” best applies here.

# Facts about Aggression

Aggression varies from threats to verbal abuse to physical abuse and violence. It is very difficult to predict aggression and violence.

**SOME INDICATORS OF POTENTIAL VIOLENCE MAY INCLUDE:**

* expressed paranoia/mistrust
* a highly unstable school or vocational history
* a history of juvenile violence or substance abuse
* prior history of violence or abuse, including history of arrests
* fascination with weapons
* history of cruelty to animals as a child or adolescent
* impulse control problems
* fire-starting behaviors

# YOUR FIRST STEP: Assess your level of safety. Call 911 if you feel in danger.

# IF A STUDENT THREATENS YOU BY E-MAIL, MAIL, OR PHONE:

Threatening mail, phone calls, and e-mails be referred to Metropolitan Community College Police, (531) 622-2222.

**WHAT TO DO:**

* Prevent total frustration and helplessness by quickly and calmly acknowledging the intensity of the situation.
* If you feel it is appropriate to stay with the student, remain in an open area with a visible means of escape. For example, sit closest to the door and do not let the student get between you and the door. Stay in an open area.
* Enlist the help of a co-worker.
* Explain to the student the behaviors that are unacceptable. (“I am glad to talk with you if you are willing to speak with me without yelling.”)
* Stay calm and set limits. (“So, let’s talk about what is upsetting you, but I want to be very clear that we have to both do this without getting angry. Otherwise, we shouldn’t continue this today.”)
* Use a time-out strategy (that is, ask the student to reschedule a meeting with you once the student has calmed down), if the student refuses to cooperate and remains aggressive or agitated. (“I think it is best that we stop for today, but I do not want to drop this so let’s set a time to come back together and then we can both have the chance to settle down.”)

*RESPONDING to the Student who is Aggressive or Potentially Violent*

**WHAT NOT TO DO:**

* DO NOT stay in a situation in which you feel unsafe.
* DO NOT meet alone with the student.
* Don’t engage in a screaming match or behaving in other ways that escalate anxiety and aggression. (e.g., don’t threaten, dare, taunt)
* Don’t ignore signs that the student’s anger is escalating. (e.g., yelling, screaming, clenched fists, threatening statements).
* Don’t touch the student or crowd his or her sense of personal space.
* Don’t ignore a gut reaction that you are in danger.

\*\**When in doubt, if any personal information the student tells you raises red flags, consult with* the Student Advocacy and Accountability team. <https://webapps.mccneb.edu/bcat/>