

Emergency Room Policy

If you suspect alcohol poisoning or have concern about an alcohol related injury, it is important to seek immediate medical care. Some students may be hesitant to seek medical attention for fear that University of Florida or Gainesville police may be contacted. If you are unsure if someone needs medical attention, it is crucial to be safe.

If a UF student is seen in the emergency room for an alcohol related incident, police are NOT notified by the staff of the hospital. Not only is this university policy, but the sharing of such information is in violation of the federal law HIPAA which protects such information.

The signs of alcohol poisoning are: 1) cold, clammy skin, 2) shallow breathing, and 3) loss of consciousness. Vomiting is a common side effect of alcohol intoxication as it is another way for the body to get rid of some of the alcohol that has been ingested. Friends of students who may be alcohol poisoned often misperceive how serious an alcohol poisoning incident can be and decide to let the friend “sleep it off” or otherwise take no action (oftentimes these friends are also intoxicated which of course interferes with sound decision-making). Calling 911 or taking the friend to the emergency room is critical. Even after a student stops drinking alcohol, their blood alcohol volume will likely continue to rise as the body deals with the overabundance of alcohol in the system. So what may appear as someone simply sleeping and “getting over” a heavy drinking episode could end up as a fatality.

To summarize:

- UF DOES NOT notify police, nor does the hospital notify UF, when a student is seen in the ER for alcohol related incidents at any of the local hospitals, including Shands at UF as well as the North Florida Regional Hospital.
- Any 911 call from campus (including UF Housing or Greek houses) WILL result in automatic University Police response as part of the standard protocol. The officer’s primary emphasis is to provide assistance and see that the student receives emergency care. On occasion, police follow up and investigation will take place if it is deemed necessary. There will be follow up from the Dean of Students Office. A student who calls for or seeks emergency assistance on behalf of a student (themselves or a friend) who is experiencing an alcohol or other drug related emergency may not be subject to mandatory alcohol and other drug charges under the Student Code of Conduct, but may be subject for referral for educational seminars, assessment, counseling, and possible treatment.
- If a registered student is transported to an emergency medical treatment center for drug use or intoxication from campus, the student’s parents or guardians may be notified by a telephone call from the Division of Student Affairs if necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals per UF’s Parental Notification Policy.