

Supporting Students in Distress

As members of the Carleton University community, we all have concern for the mental health and wellness of our students. This guide outlines how to recognize when a student is in distress and how to respond effectively to a student needing support.



Supporting Students in Distress

1. Recognize

You may be the first person to recognize that someone is in distress or to notice a change in their typical behaviour.

- Increased absences or sudden drop in grades
- Lack of participation, loss of interest
- Isolation from friends or classmates
- Missed or incomplete assignments
- Repeated requests for accommodations
- Excessive fatigue
- Difficulty with focus
- Disruptive or unusual behaviour
- Irritability or emotional outbursts
- Appetite or weight fluctuations
- Lack of personal hygiene
- Illogical or confused thinking or writing
- Increased use of substances

2. Respond

Talk with the student. Once you have recognized there may be a problem, or if others have expressed significant concern about this student, it is important to respond and to let them know you are concerned while remembering you are not a health care professional.

Acknowledge

- Express concern and be specific about the behaviour that concerns you.

"I've noticed you have been absent from class lately and I am concerned."

"How are things going?"

Listen

- Look at the student and be mindful of your body language
- Ensure you are in a quiet environment
- Practice active listening

Reassure

- Affirm student's thoughts, feelings and experience in a sensitive and compassionate manner.

"It sounds like you are feeling lonely on such a big campus."

"I'm sorry you're going through this."

3. Refer

Encourage the student to get help and make a referral to one of the services on campus. Ask if they are already connected to support on or off campus.

Engage

"Is this something you would like help with?"

"I can recommend a few resources that are available to you."

Respect

- A student may say no to a referral or may not follow up with resources. We must respect their decision, except in the case of emergencies.
- Remind them that your door is always open if they reconsider or need additional help.

Follow-up

- You are encouraged to follow up with the student to see if they have connected with support.
- Students will need time to resolve issues and concerns.

4. Reflect

Reflect on your own needs and support. Recognize the limits of what you can do and realize you cannot control how the student will respond. You must take care of yourself when helping others. Seek personal support if needed. carleton.ca/healthy-workplace/mental-health

How to Refer a Student in Distress

Stressed

Student is showing some signs of distress and can identify a few coping strategies.

Signs may include:

- academic, financial, health or personal problems
- homesickness
- heightened emotions
- lack of support

Connect student to appropriate resources (see list on reverse).

Offer support and encouragement.

To follow up:

- If appropriate, check in to see if the student has accessed support.
- Remind the student that your door is always open.

Distressed

Student's coping strategies are no longer effective or needs are complex. No imminent risk of harm to self or others.

Signs may include:

- significant changes in behaviour or appearance
- recent trauma
- deteriorating mental health
- serious emotional difficulties
- isolation/withdrawal
- increased use of substances

Contact the following to facilitate an appointment or for consultation:

Student Care and Support
613-520-2600 ext. 1358

Counselling Services
613-520-6674 (press 2)

Sexual Assault Support Services
613-520-5622

To follow up:

- Submit a Care Report. wellness.carleton.ca/care-report
- Keep your Chair or Departmental Supervisor informed.

Emergency

Student is actively planning suicide or is at risk of immediate harm to self or others.

Signs may include:

- direct or indirect reference to suicide
- threatening, violent or destructive behaviour
- student is incoherent or out of touch with reality
- the situation feels unsafe

Immediate action is required.

On-campus: 613-520-4444
4444 (from any on-campus phone)

Off-campus: 911
(Notify Campus Safety Services)

If uncertain, you can call the:
Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: 613-722-6914

To follow up after immediate action has been taken:

- Submit a Care Report. wellness.carleton.ca/care-report
- Keep your Chair or Departmental Supervisor informed.

Can I share information with other members of Carleton?

You are allowed to share information with other Carleton employees on a "need to know basis." This means that you can contact another department and may disclose only the details necessary to ensure a student's safety and to help them access support.

Resources for Students

On-Campus Resources and Support

Campus Safety Services

613-520-3612 | carleton.ca/safety

Counselling Services

613-520-6674 (press 2)
wellness.carleton.ca/counselling

Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities

613-520-6608 | carleton.ca/pmc

International Student Services Office

613-520-6600 | carleton.ca/isso

Awards and Financial Aid

613-520-3600 | carleton.ca/awards

Equity and Inclusive Communities

613-520-5622 | carleton.ca/equity

Academic Advising Centre

613-520-7850 | carleton.ca/academicadvising

Centre for Student Academic Support

613-520-3822 | carleton.ca/csas

From Intention to Action (FITA)

613-520-1028 | carleton.ca/fita

Sexual Assault Support Services

613-520-5622 | carleton.ca/equity

The Centre for Indigenous Support and Community Engagement

carleton.ca/indigenous/cisce

Student Affairs

613-520-2573 | carleton.ca/studentaffairs

Ombuds Services

613-520-6617 | carleton.ca/ombuds

Off-Campus Support Lines

Good2Talk

1-866-925-5454
Text GOOD2TALKON to 686868

Suicide Crisis Helpline

9-8-8 (call or text)

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region

Distress: 613-238-3311
Crisis: 613-722-6914

Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre

613-562-2333

Tel-Aide Outaouais

613-741-6433

LGBT Youth Line

1-800-268-9688
Text 647-694-4275

Native Youth Crisis Hotline

1-877-209-1266

Naseeha Muslim Youth Helpline

1-866-627-3342

Is the situation an emergency?

On-campus: 613-520-4444

4444 (from any on-campus phone)

Off-campus: 911

(Notify Campus Safety Services)

Uncertain? Call the **Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region**: 613-722-6914

Additional Information

For additional information about supporting students including a comprehensive list of all resources and to submit a **Care Report**, please visit our website: wellness.carleton.ca

Office of the Associate Vice-President (Student Health and Wellness)

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wellness.carleton.ca
613-520-2600 ext. 1358