MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING
ASSISTING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Everyone plays an important role in supporting student wellbeing

SEE SOMETHING
Pay attention to warning signs
You may be the first person to see signs that a student is in distress; it’s important to pay attention to warning signs. Mental health concerns can have a significant impact on everyday life, including academics.

SAY SOMETHING
Trust your instincts
Say something if you’re worried about a student or if they leave you feeling concerned. It’s okay to share your concerns about a student with someone else at the university in order to provide the student with the support they need.

DO SOMETHING
Reach out and help
A student may not know help is available or may hesitate to ask for it. Connect the student with resources and identify your concerns using Early Alert.

Use this document as a guide to help you know what to look for, say, and do.

TALKING TO A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

1. ACKNOWLEDGE
- Be specific about the behaviour that you’ve noticed
- Express your concern

I’ve noticed you’ve been absent from class lately and I’m concerned about you.

2. INQUIRE AND LISTEN
- Ask open-ended questions
- Be patient and give your full attention

How is everything going? Are you okay?

3. PROVIDE INFORMATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT
- Provide the student with information about resources
- Encourage the student to contact one of the resources provided

I’m concerned about you and I want to support you. I’d like to share a few resources with you that might help.

WHERE STUDENTS CAN GO FOR HELP
- Follow the process on pages 2 and 3 of this document
- Tell students that resources are available on the Student Services website: students.ubc.ca

ONLINE INFORMATION
View the latest version of this folder online and learn more about helping students in distress. Visit: facultystaff.students.ubc.ca

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR REQUESTS FOR COPIES OF THIS DOCUMENT CAN BE DIRECTED TO:
Student Development and Services
UBC - Vancouver Campus
604.827.2565
urgent.zips@ubc.ca

Original concept for this document courtesy of Queen’s University and McMaster University.
© University of British Columbia, 2017
FS-V4-2017-01
HOW TO HELP A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

1 OBSERVE
Take a moment to reflect on what you’ve seen and heard. Write down your answers to the following questions:

What did I see?
What did I hear?
How many similar incidents involving the student have I witnessed?

For unusual or particularly complex student concerns that are not addressed in this document, or for questions about student conduct, contact:
Student Development and Services, Office of the Vice-President, Students:
604.822.2222
urgent.ups@ubc.ca

For student sexual assault concerns, find response and support resources at:
facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/
sexual-assault/assisting-student-survivors

2 REFLECT
Think about what you have seen and heard, and then use the examples below to help determine next steps. It’s OK to feel unsure about how to respond, and you don’t need to have all the answers. Choosing any response over remaining silent is always the best option.

I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE STUDENT’S IMMEDIATE SAFETY:
THERE MAY BE IMMINENT RISK OF HARM TO SELF OR OTHERS

• Behaviour that is violent, destructive, harmful, aggressive, or threatening to self or others
• Self-harming behaviour such as cutting, hitting, or restricted eating
• Expressions of hopelessness or references to suicide
• Current or past experience of violence or sexual abuse

• Traumatic event such as loss of a loved one
• Mental health appears to be significantly deteriorating

• Student may be experiencing relationship problems, homesickness, a traumatic event, lack of social support, or physical health problems
• Student may be experiencing difficulties such as depression, anxiety, agitation, grief, or anger
• Marked deterioration in appearance or hygiene
• Substance use concerns
• Academic concerns

I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE STUDENT’S GENERAL WELLBEING:
RISK OF HARM TO SELF OR OTHERS IS LIKELY LOW

3 RESPOND
Respond as you feel appropriate. Remember that it’s OK to feel unsure about how to respond, and you don’t need to have all the answers. Choosing any response over remaining silent is always the best option.

CALL 9.1.1 AND CAMPUS SECURITY
First, call Emergency Services: 9.1.1
Then, call Campus Security: 604.822.2222

CONTACT COUNSELLING SERVICES
First, call Counselling Services and request a same-day urgent appointment for the student, and/or request to consult with a counsellor: 604.822.3811
Then, encourage the student to go directly to Counselling Services:
Room 3040, Brock Hall, 1874 East Mall, or Room 358, Lower Mall Research Station, 2259 Lower Mall

AFTER-HOURS and/or:
Call Campus Security: 604.822.2222
Contact Crisis Centre: 1.800.SUICIDE (784.2433)

CONNECT THE STUDENT TO SUPPORT
Mental health concerns and/or difficulties coping
Counselling Services:
students.ubc.ca/counselling
Primary health (family doctor care) & mental health concerns, including access to specialist care
Student Health Service:
students.ubc.ca/student-health-service

Access and Diversity:
students.ubc.ca/access
Academic, financial, or other concerns
Academic Advising Office, Enrolment Services Professional, or the Student Services website:
students.ubc.ca

4 USE EARLY ALERT
Always submit an Early Alert concern as part of your response, regardless of the perceived severity.
Early Alert allows faculty, staff, and TAs to identify their concerns about students sooner and in a more coordinated way.

EARLY ALERT:
• Provides support for all students
• Allows for earlier support before difficulties become overwhelming
• Results in less time and fewer resources needed for students to recover
• Collects concerns from different sources across campus, allowing for a better understanding of individual student needs and how to provide appropriate support in a coordinated way
• Protects student privacy using a secure system
• Is not connected to the student’s academic record

EARLY ALERT CONTACT:
early.alert@ubc.ca

EARLY ALERT TRAINING:
earlyalert.ubc.ca

HOW DOES EARLY ALERT WORK?
1. Faculty and staff notice a student is facing difficulties and identify their concerns using Early Alert
2. Managers, Student Support Services review all concerns submitted and identify the most appropriate resources for students in need of support
3. Advisors then reach out to students and offer to connect them with resources and support

92% of students respond positively to the invitation to meet with an advisor

EARLY ALERT CONTACT:
Early Alert is supported by the Managers, Student Support Services. If you have questions about or need support with the Early Alert program, please contact them at:
earlyalert@ubc.ca