MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING
ASSISTING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Everyone plays an important role in supporting student wellbeing

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

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.

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.

1. ACKNOWLEDGE
- Be specific about the behavior 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 page 2 and 3 of this document
- Tell students that resources are available on UBCO’s Student Services website: students.ok.ubc.ca

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ENCOURAGING A STUDENT TO SEEK SUPPORT
- Point out that help is available and seeking help is a sign of strength
- Acknowledge that seeking help can be scary

IF A STUDENT DOESN’T WANT HELP
- Respect their decision. Accepting or refusing assistance must be left up to the student, except in emergencies
- Don’t force the issue or trick them into going to a referred resource
- Try and leave room for reconsideration later on

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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 behaviour, contact:

**Health & Wellness**
UBC Okanagan campus
UNC 337
250.807.9270
healthwellness.okanagan@ubc.ca

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.

   - Behaviour that is violent, destructive, harmful, aggressive, or threatening to self or others
   - Self-harming behaviour such as cutting or hitting
   - Expresses hopelessness or references suicide
   - Disclosure of sexual assault
   - Student may be experiencing difficulties such as depression, anxiety, agitation, grief, or anger
   - Marked changes in appearance or hygiene
   - Substance use concerns
   - Academic concerns

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 911 AND CAMPUS SECURITY**
   First, call Emergency Services: 911
   Then, call Campus Security: 250.807.8111

   **CONTACT HEALTH & WELLNESS**
   First, call Health & Wellness and request an urgent appointment for the student, and/or request to consult with a counsellor: 250.807.9270
   Then, encourage the student to go directly to Health & Wellness: UNC 337

   **AFTER-HOURS**
   Call Campus Security: 250.807.8111
   Contact Crisis line: 1.888.353.CARE (1.888.353.2273)

   **CONNECT THE STUDENT TO SUPPORT**
   Health concerns
   Health & Wellness
   students.ok.ubc.ca/health-wellness
   Confidential support and advocacy
   Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Office
   sexvpo.ok.ubc.ca | 250.807.9640
   Arms-length student support service
   Ombuds Office
   ombudsoffice.ubc.ca
   Accommodations for disabilities, including chronic mental health condition
   Disability Resource Centre
   drc.questions@ubc.ca
   Academic, financial, or other concerns
   Student Services & Financial Support
   advising.ubc@ubc.ca
   Concerns about human rights
   Equity & Inclusion Office
   equity.ok.ubc.ca

4. **USE EARLY ALERT**
   Always submit an Early Alert concern as part of your response, regardless of the perceived severity.

   **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

   **SUBMIT AN EARLY ALERT CONCERN**
   facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/systems-tools/early-alert

   **HOW DOES EARLY ALERT WORK?**
   1. Faculty and staff notice a student is facing difficulties and identify their concerns using Early Alert
   2. Early Alert Case Managers 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 TRAINING:**
   facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/systems-tools/early-alert