Identifying and responding to students in distress

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

WEEKDAY BUSINESS HOUR EMERGENCIES

Health, Counselling & Disability Services (HCDS) Counselling Services
Ext. 78264 (from any campus phone)
613.533.6000 Ext. 78264 (from off campus)

Queen's 24hr Emergency Report Centre
Ext. 36111 (from any campus phone)
613.533.6111 (from off campus)
911

AFTER HOUR EMERGENCIES

Queen's 24hr Emergency Report Centre
Ext. 36111 (from any campus phone)
613.533.6111 (from off campus)
911

Situations Requiring Immediate Referral/Reporting

DIRECT OR INDIRECT REFERENCE TO WANTING TO DIE / SUICIDE

Regardless of the circumstances or context, ANY reference to wanting to die / suicide should be taken seriously and a mental health professional should be contacted.

Warning signs might include:

- Expressed feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, or hopelessness;
- Expressed thoughts that the world, their family and friends would be better off without them;
- Expressed feelings of powerful guilt;
- Expressed desire to die by suicide.

Call HCDS at 613.533.6000 Ext. 78264 or Queen's 24hr Emergency Report Centre at 613.533.6111 or 911

THREATS OR DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Immediately report any of the following:

- Any type of physical violence causing bodily harm (self or other);
- Specific threats of violence or harm.

Call Queen's 24hr Emergency Report Centre at 613.533.6111 or 911

BEHAVIOURS OF CONCERN

Student is:

- Incoherent or unintelligible;
- Cannot be calmed.

Call Queen's 24hr Emergency Report Centre at 613.533.6111 or 911

DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE OR MISUSE

Immediately report any of the following:

- Potential drug overdose;
- Potential alcohol poisoning.

Call Queen's 24hr Emergency Report Centre at 613.533.6111 or 911

If a student appears to have a pattern of substance abuse, try to refer them to counselling when they are sober.

Call Counselling Services at Ext. 78264 (from any campus phone)
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Other Situations Requiring Attention

**DISORDERED EATING**
Refer a student to counselling for the following reported behaviours:
- Excessive dieting;
- Uncontrolled binge eating;
- Induced vomiting after eating.

**MARKED CHANGES IN MOOD OR BEHAVIOUR**
Refer a student to counselling for the following changes in regular behaviour:
- Withdrawal from social interactions or academic work;
- Notable changes in energy levels or appearance.

**DIFFICULTY IN COMMUNICATING AND/OR DISTORTIONS OF REALITY**
Refer a student to counselling for the following reported behaviours:
- Difficulty communicating (difficulty forming thoughts, completing sentences, irrational conversations);
- Distortions of reality.

**LEARNING AND ACADEMIC CHALLENGES**
Refer a student to faculty or academic advisors for the following reported concerns:
- Serious academic concerns;
- Considering withdrawal;
- In jeopardy of failing.

**ASSAULT AND/OR HARASSMENT**
These issues may require the attention of Campus Security for safety reasons, and advising or counselling for the student involved:
- Sexual assault;
- Harassment, bullying, physical or emotional abuse;
- Stalking;
- Discrimination.
For confidential advising from the Human Rights Office, refer the student to 613.533.6886
For confidential counselling from an Outreach Counsellor who specializes in working with survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence, refer the student to 613.533.6000 ext. 78441

Call Student Health Services at 613.533.2506 or Queen’s 24hr Emergency Report Centre at 613.533.6111

See reverse for Resources

Other Signs of Distress

- Changes in academic performance (deterioration in quality of work, frequently missed assignments and classes, excessive procrastination, avoidance of participation);
- Listlessness or falling asleep in class;
- Unusual behaviour (unexplained crying, laughing to self, rapid speech, disorganized thinking, suspiciousness);
- High levels of irritability;
- Significant weight loss or gain;
- Physical symptoms (nausea, headaches, problems with eating, excessive or disrupted sleeping);
- Changes in hygiene or dress;
- Changes in relationships or social behaviour (withdrawal, isolation or dependency);
- Difficulty concentrating or communicating.
What To Do and Say

APPROACH
- It is OK to ask and express concern
- Be specific about the behaviour that worries you

LISTEN
- Listen non-judgmentally, having an open world view
- Meet in a private location, be patient and give your undivided attention

SUPPORT
- Acknowledge their thoughts and feelings in a compassionate way
- Offer hope and reassure them you are concerned and want to help

REFER
- Provide student with resources
- Offer to make the call with the student

Is there anything I can do to help you?
I've noticed you've been absent from class lately and I'm concerned about you.

It sounds like you're feeling out of place.
If you'd like, I can call and book the appointment for you while you are here with me.

Making a Good Referral
- Point out that help is available and seeking help is a sign of strength and courage rather than weakness. Acknowledge that seeking help can be scary;
- Research resources (see the back of this folder), contact Counselling Services for recommendations on how to approach the situation at Ext. 78264;
- If the student appears reluctant, you can help by:
  - Offering to contact the resource on their behalf while they are in your office
  - Offering to sit with the student while they make the initial contact themselves
  - Accompanying the student to the appointment if appropriate and you feel comfortable
- Provide the student with take-away materials and information (contact numbers, locations, etc.);
- Offer to follow-up with the student, but don't insist on knowing what the student has done.

If a Student Says “No” to a Referral
- Respect their decision. Accepting or refusing assistance must be left up to the student, except in emergencies, when life is in danger;
- Don't force the issue or trick them into going;
- Try and leave the door open for later reconsideration.

I respect your decision. I hope you will keep these options in mind. My door is always open.
Resources

HEALTH AND COUNSELLING
Health, Counselling and Disability Services (HCDS)
queensu.ca/hcds
Counselling Services
613.533.6000 Ext. 78264
HCDS – Health Promotion
613.533.6712
HCDS – Health Services
613.533.2506
HCDS – Psychiatry
613.533.2508
Telehealth Ontario
Free confidential advice from a registered nurse 24/7
1.800.797.0000
TTY 1.866.797.0007

PEER SUPPORT
AMS Peer Support Centre
613.533.6000 Ext. 75111
SGPS Student Advisor Program
613.533.3169
Rector
613.533.2733

HCDS – Peer Mentor Program
613.533.6000 Ext. 78264

ACADEMIC
Faculty of Arts & Science
613.533.2470
Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science
613.533.2055
Queen's School of Business
613.533.2330
Faculty of Education
613.533.6205
School of Graduate Studies
613.533.6100
School of Medicine
613.533.2542
School of Nursing
613.533.2668
School of Rehabilitation Therapy
613.533.6103
Faculty of Law
613.533.2220
Disability Services
613.533.6467
TTY 613.533.6566
Student Academic Success Services (SASS)
Learning Strategies
The Writing Centre
613.533.6315

OTHER
Campus Security and Emergency Services
24 Hour Crisis
613.533.6733
Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre
613.533.6970
International Centre (QUIC)
613.533.2604
Human Rights Office
613.533.6886
Equity Office
613.533.2563
Chaplain's Office
613.533.2186
Residence Life and Dons
613.533.6790
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
1.800.387.4765
University Ombudsman
613.533.0495

COMMUNITY
Frontenac Community Mental Health and Addiction Services
24 Hour Crisis
613.544.4229
Administration
613.544.1356
Telephone Aid Line Kingston (TALK)
Crisis 7:00pm-3:00am
613.544.1771
Ontario Mental Health Helpline
Help in 170 languages
1.866.531.2600
Good2Talk
Post-secondary student helpline (24/7)
1.866.925.5454
911

If you have questions or comments about this folder, or would like additional copies, or alternative formats, please contact the Office of the Vice-Provost and Dean of Student Affairs at 613-533-6944 or vpdean.sa@queensu.ca.

Based on a concept from McMaster University with thanks
Identifying and Responding to Students in Distress

**IS THE STUDENT IN DISTRESS?**
- The student is reporting significant problems
- There are observable signs of distress
  - Significant change in mood
  - Difficulty with controlling emotions
  - Other marked changes in behaviour
- Others (faculty, staff, students) have expressed concern about the student

**EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**
- Reference to wanting to die / suicide (direct or indirect);
- Threatening and/or disruptive behaviour;
- Explicit threats of violence or harm (self or other);
- Student cannot be calmed;
- Student is incoherent/unintelligible;
- Potential drug overdose or alcohol poisoning.

**OTHER SITUATIONS REQUIRING ATTENTION**
- Disordered eating;
- Assault;
- Harrassment / bullying;
- Marked change in mood or behaviour;
- Difficulty communicating;
- Distortions of reality;
- Learning and academic challenges;

Any concern on your part about the student’s well-being.

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