

Assisting Colleagues in Distress



Recognize

In your role as an employee at Queen's University, you may be the first person to see signs that a colleague is in distress, or they may have come to you specifically to ask for your help. Use this guide to familiarize yourself with common signs of distress, and the steps you can take to help.



Respond

It is okay to feel uncertain about how to respond. You don't need to have all the answers. Being there to support your colleague is often the most valuable thing to do.

Approach

If possible, move to a discreet and appropriate environment. It is okay to ask and express concern. Be specific about the behaviour that worries you. Say what you see.

Listen

Listen non-judgmentally, without bias, having an open view. Listen actively, ask open-ended questions, and help them feel heard and understood.

Support

Acknowledge their thoughts and feelings in a compassionate way. Offer hope and reassure them you care and want to help.



Refer

Your role is not to diagnose or treat, but you can share that confidential help is available. Early intervention plays a key role in creating healthy and respectful workplaces. Help make them aware of the resources available.

If a colleague does not want help:

- Respect their decision. Accepting or refusing assistance must be left up to the employee, except in emergencies, when life is in danger.
- If they change their mind, they can access resources in the future.

Signs of Distress

Mental Health Concern

"I am concerned about the general well-being of my colleague and would like to offer support."

Examples:

- Unusual behaviour
- High levels of irritability
- Changes in relationships or social behaviour
- Notable changes in energy levels or appearance
- Lack of social support

High Level of Distress

"I am concerned about some recent behaviour that is out of character for my colleague."

Examples:

- Marked changes in mood, appearance, or behaviour
- Impairment with daily tasks
- Withdrawal from social interactions or work
- Substance use concerns
- Physical health concerns

Imminent Risk of Harm

"I am concerned about my colleague's safety or the safety of others."

Examples:

- Expressed feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, or hopelessness
- Expressed feelings of powerful guilt or shame
- Expressed references to suicide

If there is an imminent risk of harm, act immediately.



- First, call 911
 - Second, call Queen's 24-hour Emergency Report Centre: (613)-533-6111
- Blue lights with emergency telephones are located throughout campus.

Kingston and Queen's Resources

Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)

For 24-hour, confidential EFAP support call: 1-(877)-789-7572

Employee Wellness Services

employee.wellness@queensu.ca
queensu.ca/humanresources/intranet

Queen's 24-hour Emergency Report Centre

(613)-533-6111

Campus Security and Emergency Services 24/7

(613)-533-6733 (inquiries)

Addiction and Mental Health Services (Kingston)

Crisis (613)-544-4229 or 1-866-616-6005
Administration (613)-544-1356

24-hour Community Crisis Line

(613)-544-4229

Ontario Resources

Bounce Back Ontario

A free skill building program managed by the Canadian Mental Health Association
1-(866)-345-0224

Health Connect Ontario

Connect with a Registered Nurse to discuss your health 24/7
Call 811
TTY 1-(866)-797-0000

Mental Health Helpline - Ontario (Help in 170 languages)

1-(866)-531-2600

Ontario Mental Health

Call 211
1-(877)-330-3213

Thank you for playing a vital role in creating a healthy and respectful workplace at Queen's University.