

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS



RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS (CONCERN)

You may be the first person to observe that a student is struggling. Signs of distress include:

- Decrease in academic performance
- Noticeable change in mood or behaviour
- Isolation or withdrawal
- Overwhelm
- Repeated requests for academic consideration
- Disruptive or unusual behaviour
- Emotional or hostile outbursts
- Deterioration in personal hygiene
- Excessive demanding behaviour
- Incoherent or unintelligible communication



REACH OUT AND RESPOND (CARE)

Choose a time and place where you can safely and privately speak with a student. It is important to respond, and to let them you are concerned, recognizing your own limits and degree of expertise.

Say what you see

- Express concern and identify the behaviour
- *"I've noticed you have been falling asleep in class lately, and I am concerned."*

Listen

- The more you understand the situation, the better referral you can make.
- Express compassion. Acknowledge the student's thoughts, feelings and experiences
- *"It sounds like things are tough right now and you're finding it hard to juggle everything."*



REFER (CONNECT)

- Reassure them that asking for help shows strength.
- Provide information about **resources** and offer to support them in accessing help.
- *"There are many resources on and off campus to support you. I think *insert resource* could really help. Are you comfortable reaching out? If not, I can help connect you."*

WHAT IS A CARE REFERRAL?

A referral to Care Support Services in Student Affairs helps support students facing difficult or complex situations they are unable to navigate on their own. Faculty and staff can share concerns about a student and/or refer them for timely holistic care. Care Support Services works from a student centered, strengths-based perspective. If a student's behaviour falls within the scope of the Student at Risk Policy, the Assessment and Care Team will become involved in coordinating a response.

How to make a Care referral: Use the [online referral form](#) or email caresupportservices@queensu.ca

What to include:

- Describe what the student told you directly
- Describe specific observable behaviours
- Describe any disruptive or threatening behaviours in factual detail
- Be specific about who interacted with the student
- Share what steps you've taken
- Include any impact on other students/faculty/staff
- Upload concerning emails or relevant documents

What happens after I complete a Care referral?

A member of the Care Support Services team will reach out to the student, if needed, to connect them with supports on campus, and in the community.

How to speak to a student about a Care referral

When making a Care referral, let the student know that you are connecting them to Care Support Services. You can assure students that doing so allows academic, financial, or mental health concerns to be responded to quickly and in a more coordinated way to help the student get back on track.

Questions? Please connect! caresupportservices@queensu.ca

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STUDENT WITH DEVELOPING NEEDS

Student may be struggling and in need of support or guidance.

Signs may include:

- Academic, financial or personal stress
- Heightened emotions
- Trouble fitting in or adapting to university
- Difficulty understanding policies

What to do:

Connect student to appropriate resources



Offer support and reassurance

STUDENT WITH MODERATE NEEDS

Student appears distressed and is exhibiting concerning behaviour; Needs are complex, but there is no imminent risk to self or others.

Signs may include:

- Struggling to manage mental health issues
- Significant changes in mood, appearance or behaviour
- Changes in drug or alcohol use
- Verbally aggressive or concerning behaviour
- Significant difficulty coping with daily stressors
- Concerning comments posted to social media or included in emails

What to do:

Submit a Care referral and a member of the Care team will connect with the student



EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Student behaviour is threatening, aggressive, explosive, life threatening or self-injurious.

- Direct or indirect reference to wanting to die/suicide
- Threats of violence, ultimatums, or physical aggression
- Potential alcohol and/or drug overuse
- Sexual or domestic violence, with an immediate safety need
- Incoherent or unintelligible communication

What to do:

Immediate action and referral

- Call the **Emergency Report Centre** at 613-533-6111 or 911
- **AMHS Crisis Services** responds to situations in the community where urgent in-person support is needed. Call 613-544-4229 or toll free 1-866-616-6005.

Once the immediate need for safety has been satisfied, a Care referral must be filed.

A note about privacy: Privacy laws allow for information sharing on a "need to know basis" to maintain student and campus safety. The Care team is committed to maintaining student privacy, while providing timely support.

Please note: Sexual violence disclosures are best referred to Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Services

Questions? Not sure if you should make a referral? caresupportservices@queensu.ca



Queen's
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STUDENT AFFAIRS
Student Conduct and Care