

Identifying and responding to students in distress

Situations Requiring Attention

ACADEMIC AND LEARNING CHALLENGES

Refer a student to faculty or academic advisors for the following reported concerns:

- Serious academic concerns;
- Considering withdrawal;
- In jeopardy of failing;
- 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.

DISORDERED EATING

Refer a student to Student Wellness Services for the following reported behaviours:

- Excessive dieting;
- Uncontrolled binge eating;
- Induced vomiting after eating.

MARKED CHANGES IN MOOD, APPEARANCE OR BEHAVIOUR

Refer a student to Student Wellness Services for the following changes in regular behaviour:

- Withdrawal from social interactions or academic work;
- Notable changes in energy levels or appearance;
- Unusual behaviour (unexplained crying, laughing to self, rapid speech, disorganized thinking, suspiciousness);
- High levels of irritability;
- Changes in relationships or social behaviour (withdrawal, isolation or dependency).
- Significant weight loss or gain;
- Physical symptoms (nausea, headaches, problems with eating, excessive or disrupted sleeping);
- Changes in hygiene or dress;

DIFFICULTY IN COMMUNICATING AND/OR DISTORTIONS OF REALITY

Refer a student to Student Wellness Services for the following reported behaviours:

- Difficulty communicating (difficulty forming thoughts, completing sentences, irrational conversations);
- Distortions of reality;
- Difficulty concentrating or communicating.

HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

Refer a student with concerns about harassment (persistent, unwanted behavior including sexual harassment) or discrimination to the Human Rights Office, 613.533.6886. If the situation involves stalking or threat of harm call Queen's 24 hr Emergency Report Centre.

Call Counselling Services at 613.533.6000 ext. 78264 or Student Health Services at 613.533.2506 or Queen's 24 hr Emergency Report Centre at 613.533.6111

What To Do and Say

APPROACH

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

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

LISTEN

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

Is there anything I can do to help you?

SUPPORT

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

It sounds like you're feeling out of place.

REFER

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

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.