

Quick Reference: Responding to Students in Crisis

On-Campus and Community Resources

Campus Security: _____

Counselling Services: _____

Indigenous Services: _____

International Student Services: _____

Accessible Services: _____

Student Services: _____

Pride Centre: _____

Health Services: _____

Financial Aid: _____

Sexualized Violence Support: _____

Supervisor: _____

If You're Concerned About Someone's Immediate Safety

If it's an emergency situation, **call 911** and then contact campus security (if the person is on campus). If the student is not on campus, call 911 and tell the operator the student's current location as soon as possible.

Mental Health and Suicide Crisis Lines

If you or someone you know needs immediate help, call one of the numbers below:

1-800-SUICIDE or **1-800-784-2433**: If you are considering suicide or are concerned about someone who may be (<https://crisiscentre.bc.ca>)

Here2Talk: 1-877-857-3397: A 24-hour phone and chat counselling support service for B.C. post-secondary students (<https://here2talk.ca>)

Mental Health Support Line: 310-6789
(no need for area code)

KUU-US Crisis Line: 1-800-588-8717:
24-hour crisis line for Indigenous people in B.C.
(<https://www.kuu-uscrisisline.com>)

Adapted from *University of Victoria, Assisting Students in Distress*. https://www.uvic.ca/student-wellness/_assets/docs/assisting-students-in-distress.pdf and Dawn Schell. *Let's Talk: A Workshop on Suicide Prevention*. University of Victoria.

Recognize, Respond, Refer

Where Do I Start?

You may be the first person to see the signs that another student is in distress. If you are concerned about this person, don't let uncertainty stop you. You are a vital link to connect them with the best resources. Begin by recognizing signs that someone may be in distress or considering suicide.

Signs That Someone May Be Considering Suicide

- Significant changes in behaviour and performance (e.g., uncharacteristically poor academic performance, temperament changes, anger, sadness).
- Changes in physical appearance.
- Isolation or social withdrawal (e.g., previously involved student stops attending classes).
- Signs of excessive substance use.
- Expressed feelings of hopelessness or despair or behaviours that indicate a likelihood of **harm** to self (e.g., suicidal thoughts, verbal, written, or creative work that includes plans to harm self. ("The world would be better off without me." "I think I should end it all." "Nothing will ever change. I give up.")
- Talking about suicide or having a plan for suicide.

When talking with someone in crisis, take the time to carefully observe, reflect, and identify whether you think there is reason for concern, and respond calmly. The most important information you can convey to another person is that you care and they matter.

Tips for Supporting Others

- Speak with the person directly and in a comfortable, safe setting.
- Be specific about the behaviour you have observed, and don't be afraid to express concern. Use objective, non-judgmental language. ("I noticed..." "I might be way off base, but when you said...")
- Stay calm and listen carefully. Acknowledge how the person is feeling and let them know you want to help. Take their concerns seriously.
- If appropriate, ask directly if they are thinking of suicide. ("Are you feeling so bad that you're considering suicide?") If they say they are thinking of suicide, consider the risk. ("How often are you thinking about this?" "Do you have a plan?")
- Ask if they have any personal supports or if they've talked to anyone else about how they are feeling.
- Make a referral. Let them know about supports on and off campus and that seeking help is a sign of strength and courage. ("We need extra help. I want to connect you with someone who can help keep you safe." "Would you like to call counselling services together and book an appointment?")
- If you're not sure what to do or something doesn't feel right, contact campus security, counselling services, or student services. You don't have to do this alone.
- Know your boundaries and take care of yourself. Don't feel it's your responsibility to solve someone else's problems on your own. Ask for help.

Connecting Students with Resources and Support

You are very concerned about another student

- Person's behaviour is uncharacteristic or there are significant changes.



- Speak with the person in a comfortable and safe setting.
- Be specific about the behaviour you've observed. Stay calm and listen carefully.
- If appropriate, ask the student directly if they are thinking about suicide.
- Make a referral. Tell them about supports on and off campus.
- If you are unsure of what to do, seek advice.



Help them connect with on-campus resources

- Counselling services
- Student services
- Campus security (see page 1 for full list)
- Or help them contact a mental health or crisis line

You are concerned for the student's immediate safety (emergency)

- The person's behaviour is a risk to themselves or others (e.g., they have taken pills or are experiencing psychosis).



- Get help immediately.



- Call 911, and then call campus security (if the person is on campus).
- Stay with the person (either in person or online) until you know they have help.

Support for You

Helping someone in crisis can affect your personal well-being. Once the person is supported, ensure that you are also supported. Talk to a colleague, friend, counsellor, Elder, or supervisor to debrief. If you feel overwhelmed and need professional support, contact a counsellor.