

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Common signs of student distress

Noticeable changes in academic performance

Examples: missing classes, assignments done poorly or handed in late, decrease in participation in class activities, confusing written assignments.

Noticeable changes in appearance or behaviour

Examples: poor hygiene; confusion; emotional and/or upset; agitation; verbal disruption; social isolation. Signs of excessive alcohol or drug use.

Concerning communications

Examples: written (e-mails, texts, assignments) or verbal indications of confusion, high levels of stress, conflict, aggression, loneliness, hopelessness, depression, etc.

Expressed thoughts or feelings indicating potential harm to self or others

Examples: written or verbal references to suicide; intention or threats to harm self or others; language indicating deep confusion, desperation or isolation; expressions of imminent violence.

Reporting Student Behaviour *

Level of concern and potential responses



*In most cases, when seeking advice it is not necessary to provide identifying information about the student. However, when there are concerns for immediate safety or a threat of harm to self or others, report immediately.

Immediate safety concerns?

911 – Emergency Services
250-862-5401 or 6699 – Campus Security



Assisting a student in distress

1. Calmly approach the student in a safe, discreet setting. Share your concerns for his or her well-being.
2. Listen openly. Acknowledge the student's thoughts and feelings with compassion. Clarify with the student what you thought you heard.
3. Remind the student that there are helpful services available (e.g. Counselling). Offer to connect the student with the appropriate service via the Student Services office (Kelowna) or the campus Administration Office (Penticton, Vernon, Salmon Arm).
4. After offering support to the student, feel free to debrief with a colleague, chair, supervisor or Counselling Services on your interaction. Also, it's a good practice to keep a record of your concerns.

If a student says 'no' to a referral

- If it's not an emergency, respect the student's right to decline.
- Offer the services and trust that you have planted a seed.
- Say something like: "I respect your decision. I hope you'll keep these options in mind. Support is available when you're ready."

These options are guidelines. If it's not an emergency and you're unsure of what to do, consult with Student Services on your campus.

Campus Support Services

Counselling Services

okanagan.bc.ca/counselling

Kelowna	Ext. 4119
Penticton	Ext. 3200
Salmon Arm	Ext. 8200
Vernon	Ext. 2200

Aboriginal Services

okanagan.bc.ca/aboriginal

Kelowna	Ext. 4498
Penticton	Ext. 3280
Salmon Arm	Ext. 8275
Vernon	Ext. 2284

Accessibility Services

okanagan.bc.ca/accessibility

Kelowna	Ext. 4730
Penticton	Ext. 3242
Salmon Arm	Ext. 8211
Vernon	Ext. 2209

International Education

okanagan.bc.ca/international

Kelowna	Ext. 5443
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Other Student Services

Kelowna	Ext. 4119
Penticton	Ext. 3200
Salmon Arm	Ext. 8200
Vernon	Ext. 2200

Quick checklist

- ✓ **Student well-being.** Everyone has a part to play in supporting student well-being. You don't need to take on the role of counsellor, but you can connect students with additional supports.
- ✓ **Remember: pay attention.** Take note of any warning signs or unusual behaviour.
- ✓ **Say something.** An active response is better than staying silent. It's okay to share your concerns with a colleague, supervisor or Counselling Services.
- ✓ **Make a referral.** Offer to connect the student with Student Services.
- ✓ **Support is available to you as well.** As an employee, assisting a student in distress can have an affect on your own well-being. Don't shoulder this concern alone. Debrief with a colleague, supervisor or chair or take advantage of the Employee and Family Assistance Program for confidential counselling and other services. Visit www.okanagan.bc.ca/hr for more information.

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