





# RESPONDING TO STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

This resource is designed to help you respond to a student in distress. Recognizing signs of distress and responding with care and concern are critical factors in supporting a healthy campus community.

			
<h2>ASK</h2>	<h2>SUPPORT</h2>	<h2>REFER</h2>	<h2>FOLLOW-UP</h2>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Trust your instincts, and pay attention to worrisome behaviours.</li><li>Approach the student to ask about their wellbeing during a one-on-one conversation.</li><li>Be specific about your concern when speaking with the student.</li></ul> <p><i>"I wanted to talk with you because I noticed you have been absent a lot lately and I'm concerned about you."</i></p> <p><i>"For the past two weeks, you have appeared to be sad and distracted. I'm concerned about your wellbeing. How is this semester going for you?"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Listen openly and non-judgmentally.</li><li>Ask questions to help gather information and understand the students' situation.</li><li>Acknowledge the students' thoughts and feelings in a compassionate way.</li><li>Offer hope.</li></ul> <p><i>"Can you tell me more about what is happening?"</i></p> <p><i>"It sounds like you are feeling overwhelmed. You are not alone. There are people and resources that can help."</i></p> <p><i>"Maybe one thing we can do is get you some support to help you with what you're going through right now."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Encourage the student to connect with available resources as soon as possible. Early help seeking may support improved outcomes.</li><li>Provide information about available services or resources. Resource information is included on the other side of this page.</li><li>Offer to help the student connect with available resources. If appropriate, you may offer to contact a resource or walk with the student to a resource.</li></ul> <p><i>"I know that there are services on campus to help you deal with these concerns. With your permission, I can help you connect with these resources."</i></p> <p><i>"If you'd like, we can call and inquire about booking an appointment for you."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Offer to follow-up with the student, but do not insist on knowing what has happened.</li><li>Respect the student's decision to accept or refuse assistance, except in situations where you are concerned about a risk of harm. In these situations, contact Campus Security. <b>If the situation involves imminent risk of harm, call 911.</b></li><li>If you need personal support, reach out to colleagues or relevant campus or community resources.</li></ul> <p><i>"I respect your decision. I hope you will keep these options in mind. My door is always open."</i></p> <p><i>"Would it be ok if I follow up with you after class next week?"</i></p>

The design of this resource is based partially on resources developed by Mount Royal University, Queen's University and the University of South Carolina. Adapted with permission from Mount Royal University.

# REFERRING A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

This resource aims to help you refer a student who may need additional support. When in doubt, contact any of the resources listed below for consultation or assistance.

**Call 911 if the situation requires emergency response (police, fire, ambulance).**

## CONCERN

**Risk of harm  
to self or others**

**Aggressive or violent  
behaviour**

**After hours concern**

## HOW TO HELP

**Contact Campus Security  
403-220-5333**

Campus Security is available 24 hours a day to respond to situations that require an immediate response.

**Call 911 if the situation requires emergency response (police, fire, ambulance).**

## CONCERN

**Disturbing or worrisome  
behaviour or  
communication**

**Concern about potential  
harm to self to others**

## HOW TO HELP

**Contact the Student-At-Risk Team  
403-220-4923 or SAR@ucalgary.ca**

The SAR Team is a multidisciplinary campus resource that is available to consult with students, faculty and staff about these concerns during regular University business hours. The team responds to concerns by conducting an initial assessment of violence risk and engaging with involved individuals as early as possible to minimize the risk of harm. Response may include: outreach to involved individuals, offer of support or resources, direct intervention, or further assessment.

## CONCERN

**Emotional distress,  
personal crisis, illness,  
mental health concern, or  
concern about potential  
harm to self**

## HOW TO HELP

**Contact the SU Wellness Centre  
403-210-9355**

Counsellors, physicians, nurses and chaplains are available to meet with students and to consult with faculty and staff about issues of concern. The centre is open from 9:00am - 4:30pm, Monday to Friday. For after hours support, the Distress Centre Help Line is available at 403-266-4357.