Your guide to
RECOGNIZING & RESPONDING TO STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Last updated: October 2018
1 RECOGNIZING

a student in distress

SIGNS THAT A STUDENT MAY BE IN DISTRESS:

- Significant changes in mood
- Difficulty controlling emotions
- Others have expressed concern about the student
- Changes in academic performance
- High levels of irritability
- Listlessness or falling asleep in class
- Unusual behaviour
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Changes in hygiene or dress
- Changes in relationships or social behaviour
- Difficulty concentrating or communicating
- Disordered eating
- Assault and/or harassment
- Learning and academic challenges
- Withdrawal from social interaction

2 RESPONDING

to a student in distress

APPROACH

“I’ve noticed you’ve been absent from class lately and I’m concerned about you.”

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

LISTEN

“Is there anything I can do to help you?”

- Listen with an open mind
- Be patient and give your undivided attention

SUPPORT

“It sounds like you’re feeling out of place.”

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

3 REFERRING

a student in distress

Refer the student to the Dalhousie Student Health & Wellness Centre where a member of our interprofessional healthcare team will assess, triage, and assist the student in meeting their needs.

Don’t forget to: Point out that help is available and seeking help is a sign of strength and courage, not a weakness. Offer to follow up with the student, but don’t insist on knowing what the student has done.

If the student appears reluctant:

- Offer to refer the student online to our on campus case manager, who will reach out to the student and offer support.
- Offer to sit with the student while they make initial contact themselves.
- Accompany the student to their appointment if appropriate and you feel comfortable.

IF THE 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 consideration.

“I respect your decision. I hope you will keep these options in mind. My door is always open.”
Dalhousie students have access to Dalhousie's on-campus Student Health & Wellness Centre. The Centre provides quality primary and mental health care services to promote and enhance students' health.

The Student Health & Wellness Centre's interprofessional team includes:
- nurses
- physicians
- social workers
- psychiatrists
- counsellors
- psychologists
- health promotion experts

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

**COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**
- Black Student Advising Centre
dal.ca/bsac | 1321 Edward Street
902-494-6648 | bsac2@dal.ca
- Indigenous Student Centre
dal.ca/isc
1321 Edward Street | 902-494-8863
- International Centre
dal.ca/internationalcentre
1246 LeMarchant Street
902-494-1566
internationalcentre@dal.ca
- LGBTQ2SIA+ Collaborative
dal.ca/hres | 902-494-6672
collaborative.plus@dal.ca
- Multifaith Services
dal.ca/multifaith | SUB, Room 407
902-494-2287 | multifaith@dal.ca
- South House Sexual & Gender Resource Centre
southhousehalifax.ca
1443 Seymour Street
902-494-2432
outreach@southhousehalifax.ca
- Stay Connected Mental Health Peer Support
dal.ca/stayconnected
peersupp@dal.ca

**OFF CAMPUS**
- Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
  Sexual Assault
  Nurse Examiner 902-425-0122
  General Enquiries 902-422-4240
- Bayers Road Community Mental Health Services
  902-454-1400
- Kids Help Phone (up to age 20) 1-800-668-6868
- Mental Health Mobile Crisis Unit 902-429-8167 (24hrs)
- Talk to a Nurse 811

**SOLVING PROBLEMS**
- Campus Case Manager
dal.ca/studenthealth/referral
- DSU Equity & Accessibility Office
dsuvpi@dal.ca
- DSU Student Advocacy Service
ds.ca | 902-494-2205
dsas@dal.ca
- Human Rights & Equity Services
dal.ca/hres | hres@dal.ca
902-494-6672
- Ombudsperson
dal.ca/ombudsperson
ombuds@dal.ca
- Social Workers
social.worker@dal.ca
- Student Conduct Office
dal.ca/think

**ONLINE RESOURCES**
- Ask A Nurse
dal.ca/askanurse
- DalSafe App
dal.ca/dalsafe
- Dal Thrive
dal.ca/Thrive
eMental Health
ementalhealth.ca
- Keep It Social
keepitsocial.ca
- Live Well
dal.ca/livewell
- Q-Life Resilience Project
dal.ca/resilienceproject
- WellTrack
dal.ca/welltrack
211
ns.211.ca

If there is an academic issue, you can also refer your student to:
Bissett Student Success Centre (902-494-3077), the Student Accessibility Centre (902-494-2835), and/or Faculty Advising dal.ca/advising.

The inclusion of resources external to that of Dalhousie University does not reflect importance or endorsement, and the University does not control or guarantee the relevance or competence of their services.
IN A MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY SITUATION

Is someone...
Making direct or indirect reference to wanting to die/suicide?
Making threats or engaging in disruptive behaviour?

If you answered ‘yes’ to EITHER of the above, call one of these numbers now:

**DAL Security**
902-494-4109

**Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team**
902-429-8167

**Off Campus Emergency Services**
911

*From the Office of the Vice-Provost, Student Affairs and Student Health & Wellness.*
*Based on a concept from McMaster University and Queen’s University, with thanks.*
*If you have any questions or comments about this folder, or would like additional copies, please contact Student Health & Wellness at livewell@dal.ca or 902-494-1252.*