

Tips for Supporting Learners in Distress

*Adapted with permission from Undergraduate Learner
Affairs, Faculty of Medicine University of Toronto.*

1

REMEMBER

- You are NOT in a clinical physician role
- Personal health information is still managed as per PHIPA
- Confidentially unless unsafe

Don't

Instead

Take a history

- Acknowledge learner's distress
- Connect them to appropriate resources, including any support learner currently has in place

Promise absolute confidentiality

- Reassure learner you will keep information confidential and take direction from them, exception being imminent risk of harm to them or others; then advise learner you will disclose only to necessary individuals

Offer/provide psychotherapy

- Follow up/check in with the learner to ensure they have connected with appropriate resources, if learner gives you permission to do so
- Maintain appropriate, professional boundaries

2

RESPONSES

Connect learner to appropriate people based on the type of concern.

Type of Concern	Details
Emergent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imminent risk of harm to self or others Sudden/significant change in level of function
Urgent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attention needed within 48 hours
Non-urgent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attention needed within 2 weeks
Learner Mistreatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult Student and Resident Affairs websites for information on how to disclose/report
Unsure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are looking for some direction re: how to proceed

PLEASE CONTACT

For NS and PEI-based learners:

Dr. Carolyn Thomson, Assistant Dean, Resident Affairs, carolyn.thomson@dal.ca

Dr. Suzanne Zinck, Assistant Dean, Student Affairs, suzanne.zinck@dal.ca

Distributed DMNS Student Affairs Site Reps: [https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/faculty/medicine/departments/core-units/student-affairs/Distributed Nova Scotia LIC Site Representatives.pdf](https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/faculty/medicine/departments/core-units/student-affairs/Distributed%20Nova%20Scotia%20LIC%20Site%20Representatives.pdf)

Office of Student Affairs: medicine.dal.ca/departments/core-units/student-affairs.html

Office of Resident Affairs: medicine.dal.ca/departments/core-units/resident-affairs.html

For NB-based learners:

Dr. Lisa Sutherland, Assistant Dean, Student & Resident Affairs, DMNB, sutherll@dal.ca

DMNB Student & Resident Affairs Reps: medicine.dal.ca/departments/core-units/DMNB/people/faculty/site-leadership.html