



## Faculty/Staff Guide Responding to Students in Distress

Membership in a caring community is a significant protective factor which supports student well-being. Faculty/staff recognition of student distress symptoms and faculty/staff referrals to CHW can start a student on a path to improved wellness. Below are potential signs of student distress, helpful referral steps in non-emergency and emergency student situations, and tips for talking with a student in distress.

### Signs of Student Distress

Changes in any of the following areas may indicate that a student is experiencing emotional and/or physical health concerns:

- changes in academic performance - attendance, class participation, procrastination, poor quality work, difficulty concentrating
- marked changes in appearance - hygiene, weight loss, weight gain
- shifts in behavior - social withdrawal, hyperactivity, fatigue, irritability, aggressiveness
- shifts in mood - apathy, anxiety, sadness, hopelessness, grief, anger, over-excitement
- thought processes that seem bizarre, paranoid, racing, or delusional

### CHW Counseling Referral Steps for Students in Distress (non-emergency)

- Inform the student about CHW Counseling and suggest that the student seek assistance.
- Inform the student that CHW Counseling has a crisis counselor available M-F, 11AM-4PM. It is more helpful to call ahead, if possible.
- During regular business hours for the academic year (Monday-Thursday 9AM-6PM, Friday 9AM-5PM) or during business hours for the summer (Monday - Friday, 9AM-5PM), if helpful, walk the student to Counseling, Health, & Wellness Services - 73 Tremont St, 5<sup>th</sup> floor or assist the student in calling CHW Counseling at 617.573.8226.

### How to Talk to Students about Your Concerns (non-emergency)

Acknowledging a student's distress is one way to begin. Share with the student what you have observed about them behaviorally, that you are concerned about their well-being and that university support and resources are available. Behaviorally describing what you see rather than judging what you see is helpful. (*"I have noticed you are falling asleep in class and coming to class late for the past two weeks. I am concerned about you,"* versus *"You seem like you just don't care about this class. You fall asleep, you come late."*)

When talking to students, also consider the following:

- **Privacy:** Talk to students in private when both of you have time and are not preoccupied
- **Honesty:** Share what you observe about a student without judging their experience.
- **Limits:** It is not your role or responsibility to counsel students on personal or health matters but you can help them get the support they need.



- **Suggest help-seeking:** Suggest that a student seek help instead of ordering them to do so.
- **Reassure** them that seeking help is a sign of strength.
- **Refer:** Follow the CHW non-emergency counseling referral steps above. If the student is receptive to seeing a medical provider for physical health concerns, they can be seen on a walk-in basis Monday (10:30AM-5PM), Tuesday-Thursday (10AM-5PM) and F (10AM-4PM) in CHW Health Services during the academic year and during the summer (Monday, 10:30AM – 4PM, Tuesday – Friday, 10AM – 4PM)..

### Response to Student Concerns (Emergencies)

Mental health emergencies include:

- If a student exhibits psychotic symptoms (bizarre behavior, paranoia, delusions, hallucinations)
- If a student verbally, physically or in writing indicates or insinuates intent to harm self and/or others; including statement(s) about suicide or violence threats
- If a student says they have been sexually assaulted
- If a student has made a suicide attempt

### Steps for Mental Health Emergencies

If a student requires immediate medical attention, call 911 and the Suffolk University Police Department at 617.573.8111. Provide both 911 and Suffolk Police information about your location and need for an ambulance.

**Contact the Dean of Students.** CAS/SBS Students: During business hours M-F (8:45AM-4:45PM) call 617.573.8239. The Dean of Students/Student Affairs also has walk-in hours M, TUE, TH, F (11AM-1PM) and WED (11:30AM-1PM). A Student Affairs Dean on Call can be contacted via Suffolk Police for after hours for emergencies. **Law Students:** During business hours M-F (10AM-6PM) call 617-573-8157. The Law School Dean of Students can be contacted via Suffolk Police after hours for emergencies.

**Contact CHW Counseling.** During academic year business hours M-Th (9AM-6PM), F (9AM-5PM) or during summer business hours (M-F, 9AM-5PM), call 617.573.8226. Outside of business hours, for emergencies call 617.573.8226 and press 0 to be connected to a counselor.

**Do not leave the student alone.**

**Do not promise confidentiality.** It is important for the student to know that you are involving professionals who can help (even if the student does not feel that is possible). Only share information about the incident with people who absolutely need to know.

### Student Medical Incidents or Emergencies

Call Suffolk Police at 617-573-8111. Suffolk Police are trained as first responders and will determine if transport to CHW Health Services or the hospital is necessary. Be sure to clearly identify the location of the medical emergency.

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