

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS: QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

This booklet is designed as a Quick Reference Guide to helping students in distress. Faculty staff, parents or friends may be among the first to notice when a student is having difficulty. By recognising the signs of emotional distress and responding with interest and concern, you can play a vital role in helping the student find appropriate assistance and to resolve the issues at hand.

In an emergency where a student is experiencing high levels of distress or threatening self harm, stay with the student. You may need to ask a colleague to assist you in accessing help. Call the Campus Security on (02) 9351 3333 and request an immediate and urgent response.

Campus Security can also be called for serious incidents. A serious incident includes an actual or threatened tragic or traumatic event, or situation which affects a student, such as:

- severe verbal or physical aggression
- death, serious injury or threat (including suicide)
- natural disaster
- assault, including sexual assault
- drug or alcohol abuse
- missing students

Camperdown / Darlingtong Campus: Useful Telephone Numbers

University of Sydney Campus Security Service
Services Building G12, cnr Abercrombie Street & Codrington Street
Phone: (02) 9351 3487

Counselling and Psychological Services, Student Support Services
Level 5, Jane Foss Russel Building G02
Phone: (02) 8627 8433 or (02) 8627 8437

University Health Service, Wentworth Building
Level 3, Wentworth Building G01, cnr City Road & Butlin Avenue
Phone: (02) 9351 3848

University Health Service, Holme Building
Main Entrance, Holme Building A09, Science Road
Phone: (02) 9351 4095

Community Resources



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

- Medical, Fire or Police Emergency • 000
- NSW Mental Health Line • 1800 011 511
- Lifeline • 131 114
- Alcohol and Drug Information Service • 02 9361 8000 or 1800 422 599
- Sexual Assault Domestic and Family Violence Helpline • 1800 200 526
- NSW Rape Crisis • 1800 424 017
- Australian Psychological Society • 1800 333 497
- NSW Poisons Information Centre • 131 126
- Relationships Australia • 1300 364 277
- G-line (Gambling) • 1800 633 635

Not all students will be at high risk, but you may have concerns that a student is struggling or their performance/attendance has declined. The following strategies may be useful in managing difficult student issues:

1. Making a referral: A first step with students may be to ask them if they are talking with anyone about their problems. It can also be helpful to be open with students about your own limits of expertise, and to suggest that talking with a counsellor might help them to develop strategies in order to cope and deal with their concerns.

You can provide the student the contact phone numbers for CAPS, or in the case that a student requires assistance in booking their initial appointment, phone us on their behalf.

You may also wish to direct students to the web resources available through the CAPS website, accessible by visiting: www.sydney.edu.au/counselling

2. Consult with CAPS: CAPS can assist with providing advice on difficult student issues. CAPS contact details are:

Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
Camperdown/Darlington Campus, University of Sydney
(02) 8627 8433 or (02) 8627 8437

3. If a student is displaying disruptive or inappropriate behaviour, sending distressing emails, or presenting a more frequent demand on staff time, the matter may be referred by CAPS or the Campus Security Service to the Behaviour & Risk Management Group (BRMG). The BRMG discusses options and strategies to manage complex student issues, as well as providing information about other sources of support on campus and in the community.

For any serious incident you have witnessed or been involved in, please contact your Supervisor and your unit/faculty HR Advisor as soon as possible.

If you are finding that you are thinking or talking about a student more often than you would for any other student, or that you are experiencing strong emotions about the student, such as worry or anger, it might also be useful to:

1. Speak with your supervisor about your concerns.
2. Consult with Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) about your management of the student and approach to difficult situations.
3. Contact your faculty/unit HR Advisor to discuss the free and confidential staff counselling services run by an external company, PPC Worldwide. This service can be provided face to face, over the phone or via email, depending on your preference. You will need to phone PPC directly to make an appointment on 1300 361 008, weekdays between 8.30am and 6:00pm.

The information in this guide was developed by Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Student Support Services, University of Sydney.

For more information visit the CAPS website: www.sydney.edu.au/counselling

