

BEGIN  
HERE

# How to Help a Student in Distress

## SIGNS OF DISTRESS

Nervousness, agitation, or irritability

Seldom leaves their room/infrequent class attendance

Tearfulness

Changes in academic performance/study behaviors Undue aggressive or abrasive behavior

Fearfulness

Dependency (i.e. student who is excessively clingy)

Frequent alcohol and/or drug use

Express your concerns to the student, pointing out your observations and asking about their situation

Are you worried about the student's safety or do you see possible warning signs? **WARNING SIGNS** include (but are not limited to):

Withdrawal from others (isolation)

Talks about or threatens suicide

Makes statements such as "I want this all to end" or "I can't go on anymore"

Significant confusion

Behavior that is bizarre, alarming, and/or dangerous

Makes statements about hurting or killing others

Marked change in behavior, mood, and/or hygiene

Appears depressed (frequent crying, insomnia, oversleeping, weight loss/gain, loss of pleasure)

Appears/reports hopelessness or helplessness

Engagement in self-harm (i.e. cutting)

YES

NO

**DIRECTLY** ask about your concerns and/or the warning signs

**DIRECTLY** ask about suicide/homicide as it relates to the displayed warning sign(s)

Do you believe the student is in imminent danger?

### DO NOT LEAVE STUDENT ALONE

#### YES (imminent danger is clearly present)

**EXAMPLES:**

Student disoriented, found unconscious or unresponsive

Student tells you that they have ingested pills beyond the recommended dose (whether student confirms it is a suicide attempt or not)

Student is threatening immediate danger to self (i.e. threatening to jump out a window, ingest pills, shoot self, etc.)

Student attempts, or threatens to cause physical harm to someone else or people in general

**Immediately**

call YSU Police at (330) 941-3527 Or 911 from a campus telephone

**WRITE DOWN :**

Everything you know about the situation (who, what, where, & when)

Any information you have about the student's difficulties (including history)

A number where you can be reached Give this information to YSU PD (to assist emergency treatment providers) and to your department head

**Faculty or Staff:**

Contact your department head/supervisor and inform them of the situation

Submit a Penguin of Concern referral at <https://ysu.edu/concern-referral> using the information you wrote in the step above

#### UNCLEAR (whether imminent danger exists)

**EXAMPLES:**

Student reports a history of self-injurious behaviors (i.e. cutting or burning) and now states a desire to engage in the behavior again

Student is found intoxicated or appears to be under the influence of substances

Student makes statements that are suggestive of suicidal/homicidal thinking that are not overtly indicative of imminent danger (i.e. "I don't know if I can keep going")

Student appears emotionally distraught and does not respond to your attempts to calm them

Student experiences a sudden stressful event (i.e. death, breakup, divorce) and seems emotionally unstable/inconsolable OR the student's response seems unusual (i.e. uncontrollable crying over a failed exam, no apparent response to the death of an immediate family member, etc.)

Student's work assignments, and/or communications contain material that raises concerns about suicide, homicide, and/or violence

Call YSU Student Counseling Services and ask to speak with a counselor at (330) 941-3737

Provide all the relevant information you have about the student and the situation to the counselor. The counselor will work with you to determine the proper course of action

If no counselor is available and during business hours (M-F, 8 am-5 pm) leave call back information where you can be reached and nature of concern with support staff

If after hours call (330) 941-3737 and press "1" after brief message to be connected to Mental Health Professional who can assist you

**Faculty or Staff**

Contact your department head/supervisor and inform them of the situation

Document relevant details about the situation (who, what, where and when) and any background information you have about the student's difficulties

**Note:**

If at any point you believe the student's **Imminent Danger** status may have changed, return to the **Imminent Danger** steps outlined in this flowchart. Do not leave student alone.

#### NO (imminent danger is clearly not present)

**EXAMPLES:**

Student is very upset about the end of a romantic relationship, but denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs

Student reports anxiety and depression, but denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs

Student's best friend recently died, but denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs

As much as you and the student are comfortable, listen and provide support; but do not act as the student's therapist

Discuss counseling services and/or other university resources that might be helpful and address any concern the student might have about these resources. If you need assistance in determining the appropriate resource(s), or about how to refer, contact YSU Student Counseling Center (330)941-3737 during normal business hours and ask to speak with a counselor

**Should you decide to refer to Student Counseling Services:**

Please know that we would like to hear your concerns about the student and your beliefs about the urgency of the situation

Consider calling with the student, or accompanying the student to Student Counseling to initiate counseling services

Continue to follow up with the student as appropriate; contact Student Counseling if you observe a significant change

Consider submitting a Penguin of Concern referral at <https://ysu.edu/concern-referral>

### CAMPUS RESOURCES

YSU Police	330-941-3527	Resch Academic Success Center	330-941-3538
Student Counseling Services	330-941-3737	Mercy Health @ Wick	330-747-4660
Dean of Students	330-941-4721	Community Standards & Student Conduct	330-941-4704
Title IX Coordinator	330-941-4629	Financial Aid and Scholarships	330-941-3505
Accessibility Services	330-941-1372	Penguin Service Center	330-941-6000

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY



Student  
Counseling  
Services