How to Help a Student in Distress

SIGNs of Distress

- Nervousness, agitation, or irritability
- Seldom leaves their room/infrequent class attendance
- Fearfulness
- Changes in academic performance/study behaviors
- Undue aggressive or abusive 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)

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, when, & where)
- Any information you have about the student’s difficulties (including history)
- A number where you can be reached to 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

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

CAMPUS RESOURCES

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

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.

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