



**You want to help.** As a Minnesota State University Moorhead faculty or staff member, you sometimes encounter students in distress. This information will help you know what to look for, recognize the warning signs, and take a course of action to get students the assistance they need.

### STUDENT IS UNDER DISTRESS.

Signs of distress (include, but are not limited to):

- Nervousness, agitation, or irritability
- Infrequent class attendance
- Crying
- Changes in academic performance
- Changes in personal or classroom relationships
- Deterioration in hygiene
- Undue aggressive or abrasive behavior
- Fearfulness
- Dependency (e.g., student who is excessively clingy)
- Frequent alcohol and/or drug use

### EXPRESS YOUR CONCERN TO THE STUDENT, POINTING OUT YOUR OBSERVATIONS AND ASKING ABOUT HER/HIS 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 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 (e.g., cutting)

1. DIRECTLY ask student about your concerns and/or warning signs.

2. DIRECTLY ask student about potential to harm self or others as it relates to the displayed warning sign(s).

YES

NO

### DO YOU BELIEVE THERE IS IMMINENT DANGER?

#### YES, IMMINENT DANGER IS CLEARLY PRESENT.

Examples:

- Student is found unconscious or unresponsive.
- Student tells you that he/she ingested pills beyond the recommended dose (whether the student states 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).
- Student attempts, or threatens, to cause physical harm to someone else (or to people in general).

#### UNCLEAR WHETHER IMMINENT DANGER IS PRESENT.

Examples:

- Student reports a history of self-injurious behavior (e.g., cutting or burning) and now states a desire to engage in this 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 (e.g., I don't know if I can keep going).
- Student appears emotionally distraught and does not respond to your attempts to calm her/him.
- Student experiences a sudden stressful event (e.g., death, breakup, divorce) and seems emotionally unstable/inconsolable, or the student's response appears unusual (e.g., uncontrollable crying over a failed exam, no apparent response to the death of immediate family member).
- Student's work, assignments, and/or communications contain material that raises concerns about suicide, homicide, and/or violence.

#### NO, IMMINENT DANGER IS CLEARLY NOT PRESENT.

Examples:

- You observe a student crying after getting off the phone, she reports feeling sad about the end of a romantic relationship; she denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs.
- Student is struggling in your class due to academic skill deficits and test anxiety; he 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 become the student's counselor/therapist.

#### IMMEDIATELY CALL PUBLIC SAFETY AT 477-2449.

#### CONTACT YOUR SUPERVISOR AND INFORM HER/HIM OF THE SITUATION.

Write down:

1. Relevant details about the situation (who, what, when, where).
2. Any background information you have about the student's difficulties.
3. A number where you can be reached.

Give a copy to Public Safety (to assist emergency treatment providers), a copy to your supervisor, and keep a copy yourself.

#### REPORT THE INCIDENT TO THE CARE TEAM

by calling the Dean of Students Office at 477-2391 or complete a report at:

[www.mnstate.edu/care-team/](http://www.mnstate.edu/care-team/)

#### CALL COUNSELING SERVICES AT 477-2211

and ask to consult with a counselor. Do not email; this situation requires an immediate response. If the situation occurs outside of normal business hours, contact Public Safety at 477-2449.

When you contact Counseling Services about a student, the staff will work with you to determine the proper course of action.

#### PROVIDE ALL THE RELEVANT INFORMATION.

If you have info about the student and situation, provide it to the counselor. If you are a faculty member you may have had the opportunity to observe the student over time, and with guidance, you can provide valuable information about the student's mental health.

When you contact Counseling Services about a student, the staff will work with you to determine the proper course of action.

#### SHOULD YOU DECIDE TO REFER TO COUNSELING SERVICES:

- Know that Counseling Services would like to hear your concerns about the student and your thoughts about the urgency of the situation.
- Consider calling the student or accompanying the student to Counseling Services to make an initial appointment.
- Continue to follow up with the student, as appropriate.
- Contact Counseling Services if you observe a significant change.

**NOTE:** If at any point you believe the student's "Imminent Danger" status has changed, return to the "Imminent Danger" steps outlined in this decision-making tree.