

# How to Help a Student in Distress

## Signs of Distress

### Agitation or Irritability

More conflicts with classmates and others  
Undue aggressive or abrasive behavior

### Tearfulness

More emotional than normal; tired in class  
Easily upset by small situations

### Fearfulness or Anxiety

Dependency (excessively clingy)  
Frequent absences or lack of participation

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:**

Reports self-hate (not deserving to live)

Marked change in appearance or hygiene

Appears agitated

Talks about or threatens suicide

Bizarre or dangerous behavior

Appears/reports hopelessness

Making statements about hurting others

Significant confusion/detached

No longer attending classes

Making statements such as "I want this all to end" or "I don't deserve to live" or "I can't do this anymore"

DIRECTLY ask about concerns and/or warning signs

DIRECTLY ask about suicide/homicide as it relates to the displayed warning signs

Yes

No

Do you believe the student is in imminent danger?

DO NOT LEAVE STUDENT ALONE

### YES (imminent danger is clearly present)

#### Examples:

Student is disoriented, found unconscious or unresponsive

Student tells you that they have ingested pills beyond the recommended dose

Student attempts or is threatening immediate danger to self

Student attempts or threatens to cause physical harm to someone else

### IMMEDIATELY:

Call Campus Safety at 201.761.7400

Contact SL&D Vice President

Notify Dean of Students

Notify Director of Counseling by phone if it was a mental health concern

### UNCLEAR (whether imminent danger exists)

#### Examples:

Student makes statements that are suggestive of suicidal/homicidal thinking that are not indicative of imminent danger ("I can't do this anymore")

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

Student experiences a sudden stressful event (death in family, breakup, etc.) and seems emotionally unstable/inconsolable OR the student's response seems unusual (flat affect, unresponsive verbally, refuses to talk to you)

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

**During Business Hours M-F 9-5:** Call the Counseling Center at 201.761.6420

Provide all the relevant information you have about the student and the situation (name, location)

Student will either be encouraged to come to the Counseling Center right away or scheduled for a Screening Appointment that day to be assessed by a counselor for risk

**After Hours:** Call Campus Safety and provide all the relevant information you have about the student and the situation

Student must agree to talk to Campus Safety who will contact the Adm on Duty for resident students, or SL&D Vice President for further instructions.

### NO (imminent danger is not present)

#### Examples:

Student is very upset about a break up, but denies any 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

Student reports practical challenges (finances, work schedule, academic concerns, relationship conflicts) but denies suicidal/homicidal thoughts and shows no warning signs

#### Listen and provide support

Provide information about Counseling Services and/or other campus resources that may be helpful and address concerns the student may have about these resources

If student is open to counseling:  
Consider calling the Counseling Center at 201.761.6420 with the student.  
Offer to send an email to CAPS, copying the student on it, to connect the student and CAPS; send to caps@saintpeters.edu

If the student is not open to counseling:  
Consider notifying Travis Whistler, DoS & chair of the CARE Team at 201.761.7360.