

Assisting students in distress

Understanding the common behavioural indicators of someone in distress can help determine the appropriate level of response. By trusting your instincts and using the indicators listed below, you can help connect the individual to the support they need before their situation escalates.

Concerning situations

Individuals showing signs of **concerning behaviours and/or appear to be in moderate distress** likely have support options, but may need to be reminded of them.

Indicators

- Change in mood and attitude
- Isolating oneself from others
- Altered class participation
- Procrastination on personal commitments or academic assignments
- Slight drop in attendance and grades
- Lack of motivation
- Deterioration in personal hygiene or dress
- Dramatic weight gain or loss and/or change in appetite and food behaviours
- Heightened levels of stress and anxiety
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Increase in risk-taking behaviour

What to do

- Address the individual's situation empathetically and without judgment using the steps from the "How to Help" section.
- Provide resources and follow up, if required.
- Contact the Augustana Early Alert System at augeas@ualberta.ca to note concern.

Critical situations

Individuals showing signs of **critical behaviours and/or appear to be in high distress** likely need professional support due to the disruptive nature of their concerns. These situations need to be addressed and followed up with, but may not require immediate action.

Indicators

- Extreme mood swings, aggression, or other disruptive behaviour
- Significant depressive state or devoid of emotion
- Acute emotional distress or high levels of anxiety and worry
- Bullying or harassment
- Dominating classroom discussion
- Hostile or sarcastic remarks
- Considerable problems with roommate, partner, friends, and/or family
- Disclosure of self-harm, disordered eating, substance abuse, current or prior sexual assault and/or partner/family violence
- Serious academic concerns (e.g. significant drop in attendance and grades)
- Severe/prolonged illness or injury
- Lack of food, shelter, and/or financial means
- Thoughts of suicide

What to do

- Listen to the individual and connect them to appropriate support services using the "Quick Referral Guide".
- Contact the Augustana Early Alert System at augeas@ualberta.ca to note concern.

If there is risk of immediate harm to self or others, contact **9-1-1**. When it is safe to do so please contact augeas@ualberta.ca and UAPS about the 9-1-1 call

Urgent situations

Individuals showing signs of **severe behaviours and/or appear to be in imminent harm** are in need of immediate attention and intervention by other helping professionals and/or emergency services.

Indicators

- Threats of suicide and suicidal behaviours
- Threats and actions of aggression towards others (i.e. physical, verbal, correspondence)
- Imminent threat or action of serious injury to others
- Serious actions of harassment towards others (i.e. physical, verbal, online) or unwanted/unwarranted contact that is persistent
- Physical contact/attack
- Presence of or threat to use a weapon

What to do

- Contact 9-1-1.

If unsure who to refer to, review the Quick Referral Guide on reverse



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How to help

Many members of the U of A community will experience stressors throughout the year. For most, speaking with someone and feeling understood will be enough. The following six guidelines are a framework on how to listen and communicate with care when assisting someone. The questions in steps two through five can also be useful when checking in with ourselves.

This section is based on the Helping Skills™ content from the Alberta Health Services Community Helpers Program.

step 1: State Your Concern

- State specific behaviours you have witnessed.
- Express your concern and willingness to talk about what they are experiencing.
- Arrange an alternative time and place if either you or the individual do not have adequate time to talk.

Communicate your concern by saying:
“You look...” “You sound...”
“I heard...” “I saw...”

step 2: Identify the Problem

- Listen without judgment and give the person time to express their thoughts and feelings.
- Clarify that you understand the problem correctly by asking open-ended questions, such as, “What I hear you saying is...”.

Start the conversation by asking:
“What is happening?”
“How have you been feeling?”

step 3: Explore Alternatives

- Examine alternatives and offer suggestions while respecting the individual and their experience.
- Discuss what they see as appropriate action on how to address their situation. The most sustainable action plans are those developed by the individual.

Explore solutions by asking:
“What ideas do you have?”
“Have you thought about...”
“How likely are you to do that?”

step 4: Consider the Outcomes

- Encourage the individual to consider how their course of action might impact others, including how others might react.

Consider the impact of the solutions by asking:
“What would happen if you did that?”
“What might the impact of these actions be?”
“Is that a problem for anyone else?”

step 5: Determine What to Do

- Acknowledge that others in similar situations often feel the same way.
- Establish a sense of hope by offering support and encouragement while reinforcing that change is possible.
- Support them in their decision.

Inquire what the person is going to do by asking:
“What would you like to do?”
“How can I help you move forward with this?”

step 6: Express Support

- Suggest and accompany the individual to a helping resource, if desired.
- Inform the individual you will check in with them to see how they are doing.
- Believe what the person is telling you, and don't promise something that you can't deliver.

Show support by saying:
“Let me know what happens.”
“Let me know if you need me.”

Quick referral guide

Augustana Campus

Student Academic Services
augsas@ualberta.ca

Accessibility Resources
augar@ualberta.ca

Counselling Centre Information
www.ualberta.ca/augustana/services/health/

Counselling Appointments
calendly.com/augustana-counselling/

Early Alert System
augeas@ualberta.ca

Emergency Bursaries
corinne.williams@ualberta.ca

Indigenous Student Services
Wahkohtowin Lodge L1-030
augustana.iss@ualberta.ca

International Student Services
corinne.williams@ualberta.ca

Chaplain
Learning Commons 2-141
780-679-1535 | augchap@ualberta.ca

Protective Services (UAPS)

Ravine Studio Building, A029
24/7 access: 780-608-2905

UniTea (peer support)
www.ualberta.ca/augustana/services/health/health-services/unitea

Wello - 24/7 virtual healthcare
info.wello.ca/augustana_registration

Off Campus

211 Alberta
2-1-1 (24-hour service referral)

ACCESS 24/7
780-424-2424 (24-hour support)

Alberta Mental Health Help Line
1-877-303-2642 (24-hour)

Alberta ONE LINE for Sexual Violence
call or text 1-866-403-8000

Association of Communities Against Abuse
acaa@telusplanet.net
1-403-724-3558

Camrose Open Door Association

4825 51 St. | 780-679-6803
24/7: 780-679-4357 (HELP)

Camrose Pride Community
www.camrosepride.ca

Distress Line CMHA
780-482-4357 (24-hour support)

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line
1-855-242-3310

Health Link Alberta
8-1-1 (24-hour support)

Kids Help Phone (24-hour support for individuals up to age 22)
1-800-668-6868

Sexual Assault 24-hour Crisis Line
1-780-423-4121

North Campus

Community Social Work Team
209 HUB | 780-492-3342

Employee & Family Assistance Program
780-492-2249

Helping Individuals at Risk

300 Campus Tower | 780-492-4372

Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights
300 Campus Tower | 780-492-7325

Office of the Student Ombuds
2-702 SUB (by appointment)
780-492-4689

Sexual Assault Centre
2-705 SUB | 780-492-9771

The Landing: A Space for Gender and Sexual Diversity
0-68A SUB | 780-492-4949

UASU Cares
uasucare.su.ualberta.ca

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