



1 RECOGNIZING a student in distress

SIGNS THAT A STUDENT MAY BE IN DISTRESS

Academic

- increased absence from class
- lack of participation/engagement
- listlessness or falling asleep in class
- missed assignments, exams or appointments
- changes in academic performance
- inconsistent academic performance
- extreme disorganization
- difficulty concentrating or communicating

Behavioural and Emotional

- significant changes in mood
- more withdrawn or more animated than usual
- difficulty controlling behaviour—angry outbursts, crying, tearfulness
- expressions of severe anxiety or irritability
- expressions of hopelessness or worthlessness
- changes in relationships or social behaviour / withdrawal

Physical

- changes in hygiene or dress
- weight loss or weight gain
- noticeable cuts, bruises or burns
- frequent or chronic illness, headaches, aches and pain
- shakiness, fidgeting or pacing
- rapid or slurred speech
- inability to make eye contact
- changes in appetite or sleep
- fatigue /exhaustion / low energy

2 RESPONDING to a student in distress

APPROACH

I've noticed that you have been absent from class lately and I am concerned about you.

- it is ok to ask and express concern
- speak to the student in private if possible
- be specific about the behaviour that is concerning you
- ask open-ended questions to encourage conversation

LISTEN

- listen with an open mind and without judgement
- be patient
- give your undivided attention

SUPPORT

It sounds like you are feeling out of place.

- acknowledge their thoughts and feelings in a compassionate way
- offer hope and reassurance
- express that you are concerned and that you want to help
- offer support

Is there anything that I can do to help you?

3 REFERRING a student in distress

- point out that help is available and that seeking help is a sign of strength and courage, not weakness
- be open and honest about the limits of your ability to help
- encourage the student to access campus supports (counselling services or the student health and wellness centre) - offer to sit with the student while they make the initial contact, or offer to make the call and/ or accompany them
- if the student refuses, respect their decision—don't force the issue or trick them - let them know that they can reach out to you later if they choose
- **In a mental health emergency**— if the student is in imminent danger of hurting themselves or others, or makes any reference to harming themselves, makes a direct or indirect reference to wanting to die / commit suicide, utters threats or is engaging in disruptive behaviour, **call 911 and the Provincial Mobile Crisis Unit 1-888-429-8167. If on campus, contact campus security.**

Would you like me to take you to their office?

I respect your decision. I hope you will keep these options in mind. My door is always open.

Post-secondary students and apprenticeship learners have access to free online mental health supports and services at healthymindsns.ca

Provincial Supports and Contacts

911

Emergency

Fire-Police-Ambulance

- When your health, safety, or the safety of others, is immediately at risk and you need help right away.
- The operator will connect you to the fire, police or ambulance services you need.
- No charge to call from any phone, including pay phones, and cell phones without a cellular plan.



Provincial Mental Health and Addictions

Crisis Line

1-888-429-8167

- Support to manage a mental health or addictions crisis.
- Timely phone crisis support and a safe space to talk.
- Trained clinicians ask questions to develop a plan to manage the crisis, or connect the callers to the right services to address their needs.
- Available 24/7 to all ages across Nova Scotia.
- Free and confidential.



Mental Health and Addictions Intake Service

1-855-922-1122

- Provides triage, screening, and navigation for Mental Health and Addiction Programs offered through Nova Scotia Health.
- No referral needed to call.
- Trained clinicians help determine what services and supports best meet the caller's needs, whether provided by Mental Health and Addictions or another community provider.
- Caller may be asked for their Health Card Number.
- Available Monday-Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm. Confidential voicemail is available evenings, weekends, and holidays.



Help Line

Live Chat at ns.211.ca

Text 211

- Seeking information about community and social services in your community or across the province.
- Experiencing unmet social or human needs, and want to connect with organizations able to meet those needs. Community Resource Navigators will refer people to the resources, programs and services needed most.
- Free and confidential. Available 24/7 in over 100 languages.

Emergency

Crisis

Urgent

Non-Urgent