

Red Folder

HELPING STUDENTS IN EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

MESSAGE TO FACULTY AND STAFF

Throughout their time at ISU, students navigate a variety of stressors, juggling academic pursuits, work commitments, social connections, family responsibilities, and financial demands. While many students successfully manage these stressors, some may find them more difficult. It is important to recognize that these students might experience emotional distress, impacting both their learning and overall well-being.

As faculty and staff members, you often play a crucial role as some of the first to identify when students are facing challenges.

Students might choose not to confide in family and friends about their struggles but could willingly share with faculty and staff or be receptive if approached by them. Your willingness to respond with compassion and support can truly make a difference in a student's life and their ability to navigate difficulties and achieve academic success.

THIS GUIDE IS DESIGNED TO HELP FACULTY AND STAFF:

RECOGNIZE

Signs and indicators of emotional distress

RESPOND

With compassion and support

REFER

Students to campus and community resources

FIND WELL. FEEL WELL. BE WELL.

RedbirdWell

RECOGNIZING SIGNS A STUDENT MAY BE IN DISTRESS

Keep an eye out for various signs, whether they are related to academics, physical concerns, psychological concerns, or safety risks that could suggest a student is going through a tough time. Recognizing these indicators is the starting point to providing the support the student needs.



ACADEMIC IMPACT

- Sudden decline in quality of work and grades
- Repeated absences
- Disorganized work
- Multiple requests for extensions
- Overly demanding of faculty or staff's time and attention
- Odd content in writings or presentations
- Elevated request or need for academic support services



PHYSICAL CONCERNS

- Changes in appearance (e.g., decline in grooming or hygiene, rapid weight loss or gain)
- Excessive fatigue or sleep disturbance
- Intoxication, hangovers, or smelling of alcohol
- Seeming disoriented or "out of it"
- Garbled, disconnected, or slurred speech



PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCERNS

- Disclosing personal distress (e.g., family or financial problems, grief, suicidal thoughts)
- Unusual or disproportionately emotional responses
- Irritability or unusual apathy
- Verbal abuse (e.g., taunting, badgering, intimidation)
- Behavior is out of context or bizarre



SAFETY RISKS

- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Physical violence (e.g., shoving, grabbing, assault, use of weapons)
- Implying or making threats to harm self or others
- Assignments with themes of rage, isolation, despair, suicidal ideations, and violent behaviors
- Stalking or harassment

RESPONDING TO AN EMOTIONALLY DISTRESSED STUDENT

Preparing To Reach Out To The Student

When reaching out to an emotionally distressed student, it is essential to be well-prepared by:

- Knowing campus resources and referral procedures
- Seeking input from colleagues or the department chair, the Dean on Duty, or Student Counseling Services
- Ensuring safety and communicating intervention plans if necessary
- Staying composed and being aware of the right contacts for assistance

Connecting With The Student

When connecting with an emotionally distressed student, it is important to create a supportive environment by:

- Listening empathetically, avoiding challenges or arguments
- Respecting privacy without making false promises of confidentiality
- Exploring the student's support system
- Asking if they have thoughts of self-harm, asking does not suggest harmful ideas
- Stressing the importance of seeking professional help and offering resources and referrals

Things To Remember

- Approach the conversation with curiosity, not accusation.
- Recognize that you are addressing a sensitive issue, and avoid taking defensive reactions personally.
- Remember, it is OK to not have all the answers and bring in campus resources as necessary.
- Remember to document all incidents for reference.
- In cases of direct threats, promptly contact ISUPD.

Follow the chart below to determine next steps in helping a student experiencing emotional distress.
Does the student present an immediate risk to themselves or others?

NO

The student's safety is not a concern, but their resources are lacking and beginning to cause them stress.

Next Steps

Refer student to appropriate resource(s)

Redbird Well



[IllinoisState.edu/RedbirdWell](https://illinoisstate.edu/RedbirdWell)

Dean of Students



DeanOfStudents.IllinoisState.edu/Services

UNSURE

The student is clearly struggling, but I am not sure the level of severity.

Connect the student with Student Counseling Services. Depending on your level of concern you may choose to:

- Help the student schedule a triage appointment
- Walk the student over to SCS during business hours
- Or call ProtoCall at 1-855-256-2188

Next Steps

Consider making a Redbird Care Team Report



StudentAffairs.IllinoisState.edu/who/safety/rct

YES

The student is a clear risk to themselves or others. Their actions or words are suggestively or directly threatening.

Call 911 or ISUPD immediately!

Next Steps

Report the concern to the Redbird Care Team



**FOR AFTER HOURS OR WEEKEND EMERGENCIES PLEASE CALL (309) 438-3655
AND PRESS "2" TO SPEAK TO A COUNSELOR IMMEDIATELY.**

REFERRING THE EMOTIONALLY DISTRESSED STUDENT TO CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

When referring an emotionally distressed student to resources provide them with realistic expectations. Make sure they understand all required actions, and note the differing confidentiality levels among some campus resources. Present the decision to seek and accept help as a positive choice. Emphasize that seeking help is a common part of the college experience and can help the student better achieve their goals. Help and encourage the student to make and keep appointments with support resources. If necessary, find someone to stay with the student while calls to the appropriate resources are made, and offer to escort the student. Set a follow-up appointment with the student to maintain ongoing support and monitor progress.

TO GET CONNECTED WITH MORE RESOURCES VISIT

REDBIRD WELL



CAMPUS RESOURCES

1. ISUPD 309-438-8631
2. Dean of Students 309-438-2008
3. Dean on Duty..... 309-438-2008
4. Student Counseling Services..... 309-438-3655
5. Student Health Services (Psychiatry, Medication) 309-438-7466
6. Health Promotion and Wellness..... 309-438-9355
7. Title IX..... 309-438-5411
8. Student Access and Accommodations 309-438-5853
9. International Student and Scholar Services 309-438-5276
10. Veterans and Military Services 309-438-2207



**STUDENT COUNSELING
SERVICES**
Illinois State University

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