

Carleton University Student Mental Health Framework:

A Guide for Supporting Students in Distress

What the statistics tell us

Postsecondary students fall into a high risk age group for mental illnesses and substance dependencies

- 15-24 year olds are the age group most likely to report mood disorders and substance dependence problems (*StatsCan*)
- Suicide 2nd leading cause of death for youth 14-25 (*StatsCan*)
- Estimated 3 student suicides daily (2002 US report)
 - Estimated 100 attempts/each completed suicide
- Late adolescence and early adulthood are prime times for the emergence of serious psychiatric disorders

What the statistics tell us

University students are more likely to report mental illness symptoms than non-university students

42% Ontario university students vs 17% of Ontario adults aged 18 to 29 years, reported elevated distress. (Adalf, 2005)

Ontario University students report having mental distress that significantly impacts their lives*

- 51- 60% of students reported feeling hopeless;
- 33-43% reported feeling so depressed they were not able to function;
- 6-9% seriously considered suicide

**(in the 12 months prior to the questionnaire; ACHA, 2009, unpublished data from six Ontario university campuses)*

BOTTOM LINE

1 in 4 students will experience a mental illness or addiction issue during their postsecondary program

YET

Adolescents and young adults least likely to access mental health services

Colleges and universities play important roles in addressing youth mental health issues

- 82.5% of 18 to 20 year olds are in post-secondary education
- Early identification
- Early access to support/treatment
- Better outcomes

How Carleton University Supports Students in Distress

- Model – effective and efficient practices that support an institutionally integrated and coordinated approach to helping students
- Student Mental Health (SMH) Framework
 - Policies, protocols, services
 - Awareness, knowledge, skills

Objectives of the Carleton University Student Mental Health Framework

1. Consistent and integrated campus-wide approach to assisting students “in distress”
2. Guide members of the Carleton community how to recognize and respond
3. Facilitate appropriate referrals – how and where
4. Raise awareness about mental health through education and training strategies
5. Address ongoing needs and emerging issues

<http://www2.carleton.ca/studentsupport/student-mental-health-framework>

Approach

- Facilitative rather than authoritative - Recognizes student's need for empowerment and right to self-determination
- Guiding principle: every reasonable effort will be made to ensure the safety and support of students in times of distress.

“Student in Distress”

Refers to a continuum –

From students experiencing a temporary setback or a specific problem that is creating significant stress, for example, a student facing sudden and serious financial hardship or loss

...to those who have chronic and serious psychiatric illnesses that interfere with daily living and academic success.

Your Role

- Facilitate and empower the student – **4 Rs**
Recognize, Respond, Refer and Report vs Fix
- Be part of the team –
Help within capacity and resources
When in doubt, consult
Maintain boundaries
- Take care of yourself -
Recognize your signs of stress

Identifying and Responding to Students in Distress

STEP ONE: Is the student in distress?

- Has the student reported significant problems to you or is seeking advice?
- Have you noticed signs of distress or significant changes in behaviour or mood?
- Have others expressed concern to you about this student?

If NO



- No immediate action is required.
- Monitor the situation.

If YES



STEP TWO: Is the situation urgent?:

It is **URGENT** if:

- The student's behaviour is threatening or highly disruptive
- The student makes serious verbal threats
- The student is incoherent or uncontrollable
- The student is making direct or indirect reference to suicide

If URGENT

- If student is **on-campus**, dial **4444** to connect with University Safety.
- If student is **off-campus**, dial **911** and notify University Safety **4444**.
- Notify the course instructor or department head.

If NON-URGENT

- Listen, show concern, be non-judgemental.
- Ask questions to determine what kind of information or referral would be appropriate.
- Provide information resources. (*See brochure – Coping with stress or crisis*)
- If appropriate, provide contact information to appropriate service.
- If the student is hesitant but willing to access help offer to walk over with them to the service – e.g. Health & Counselling is open Monday to Friday 0830 - 1630.

If NON- URGENT

- If student is unwilling, respect student's decision, encourage student to seek help if needed.
- Notify the course instructor or department head.

Referral Follow-up

- Follow-up with student - determine if the student accessed recommended help
- If not, determine if problem persists, encourage action.
- If the problem has become urgent follow urgent protocol
- If the student has followed up but you are still concerned about them notify the course instructor or department head.

Questions?

Communication: FIPPA* and PHIPA**

PRIVACY

“Both FIPPA and PHIPA stipulate that personal information about individuals may not be disclosed to persons outside the university community without the consent of the individual to whom the information relates” (Framework)

DISCLOSURE

“In emergency situations, privacy laws in Ontario...do not prohibit universities, colleges, or other educational institutions from responsibly disclosing a student’s personal information, including information about their mental, emotional or other health conditions, to parents or others who may be able to help in a crisis” (Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner)

As part of registration all students sign form informing them of policy about privacy and disclosure.

* Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

** Personal Health Information Protection Act

Disclosure without consent

WHEN

Serious health and safety concerns,
compassionate circumstances, legal requirements

WHO

Decision by and action of designated senior
Carleton University official

Communication

- Always keep the course instructor and/or department head informed. When communicating about students in distress e-mail is discouraged! Face-to face conversations are best. Pass on any concerning e-mails you have received from the student.
- Information shared with Carleton staff or faculty only on a “Need to Know” basis
- Information to those outside Carleton University is not shared unless required by law or with the explicit consent of the subject(s) of the file. Consult with the department head before taking any action.

QUESTIONS?