



ST. JOHN'S CAMPUS

*YOUR GUIDE TO*

# RECOGNIZING & RESPONDING TO STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

# 1 RECOGNIZE

## a student in distress

Awareness of the factors associated with possible mental health concerns can help you identify students potentially needing support. Becoming familiar with some of the warning signs that a student is in distress can help get them the support they need early on.

As a faculty or staff member, you are not expected to act as a mental health professional - only act as far as you feel comfortable. The goal is not to cause harm by either action or inaction. **If you do not feel comfortable approaching a student of concern you can always file a report using the MUNSafe App "Report" function (NOTE: this is not for emergencies and is not monitored 24/7).**

Possible SUPPORT situation	Possible URGENT situation	Possible EMERGENCY situation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change in participation, attendance, ability to work with others</li><li>• Missed, late or incomplete work or change in quality of work</li><li>• Changes in demeanour (eg., tearfulness, appears sad)</li><li>• Changes in energy level and alertness</li><li>• Changes in weight or appearance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Significant decline in academic performance</li><li>• Failure to submit assignments, missing tests or exams</li><li>• Requesting multiple extensions</li><li>• Expression of hopelessness or worthlessness</li><li>• Difficulty interacting with classmates or instructors</li><li>• Other learners express concern, avoid student or refuse to work with them</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Active expressions or threats of suicide or self-harm</li><li>• Altered level of consciousness (drowsy or impaired with substances)</li><li>• Marked confusion, incoherence or agitation</li><li>• Evidence of self-harm (lacerations or scars) or other unexplained injuries</li><li>• Passive reference to or preoccupation with death, dying, self-harm or suicide</li></ul>

# 2 RESPOND

## to a student in distress

Before engaging with a student, decide on your comfort level. If you do not feel comfortable approaching a student, ask for assistance from your Dean, Associate Dean, Department Head or Director. If comfortable, you may engage in a conversation, make sure that you are free from distraction and can really listen. Find a private spot to listen to the student's concern (if they have come to you), or to let the student know that you are concerned and explain why.

### APPROACH

"I've noticed you've been absent from class lately and I'm concerned about you."

- It is OK to ask and express concern
- Be specific about the behaviour that worries you

### LISTEN

"Is there anything I can do to help you?"

- Listen with an open mind
- Be patient and give your undivided attention

### SUPPORT

"It sounds like you're feeling out of place."

- Acknowledge their thoughts and feelings in a compassionate way
- Offer hope and reassure them you are concerned and want to help

# 3 REFER

## a student in distress

For advice or referrals for students, you may contact the wellness navigators in Student Wellness & Counselling Centre. In addition, there are a number of on and off-campus resources listed on the Student Wellness and Counselling website at the following link: <https://www.mun.ca/studentwellness/guide/>. Feel free to share this information with students directly. Don't forget to point out that seeking support is a sign of strength and courage, not weakness. Offer to follow up with the student, but don't insist on knowing what the student has done. This simple gesture can go a long way.

**\*As a faculty or staff member you are not expected to deal with a student in distress alone. If you feel you need support engaging in a conversation with a student of concern reach out to the Student Wellness and Counselling Centre and they can offer support.**

**If a student is deemed a danger to themselves or others, stay calm and call Campus Enforcement and Patrol (CEP)**



**IS IT AN EMERGENCY SITUATION?**

See reverse side of document

**Has someone shared an experience of sexualized violence with you?**

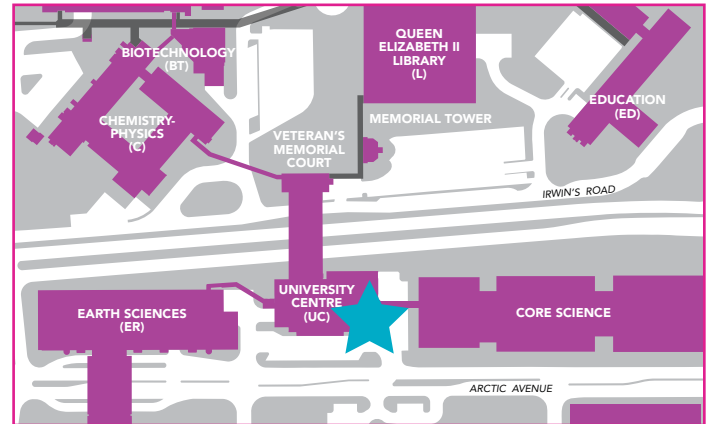
Sexual Harassment Office, Earth Sciences Building, RM-6039  
709-864-8199 | 709-637-7195 | shoffice@mun.ca

# MEMORIAL STUDENT WELLNESS & COUNSELLING CENTRE

*Memorial University students have access to Memorial's on-campus Student Wellness & Counselling Centre. The Centre provides quality primary and mental health care services to promote and enhance students' health.*

The Student Wellness & Counselling Centre's interprofessional team includes:

- nurses
- health promotion experts
- physicians
- wellness navigators
- consulting psychiatrists
- counsellors
- registered psychologists
- social workers



Student Wellness and Counselling Centre  
5th Floor University Centre, UC-5000  
Phone: 709-864-8500 (Option 5)  
[www.mun.ca/studentwellness](http://www.mun.ca/studentwellness)

## IN A MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY SITUATION

Making direct or indirect reference to wanting to die/die by suicide?  
Making threats or engaging in disruptive behaviour?

***If you answered 'yes' to EITHER of the above, call one of these numbers now:***

### CAMPUS ENFORCEMENT AND PATROL

**864-4100**

### EMERGENCY SERVICES

**911**

The inclusion of resources external to that of Memorial University does not reflect importance or endorsement, and the University does not control or guarantee the relevance or competence of their services.

Memorial University would like to acknowledge and thank Dalhousie University for use of their Blue Folder, and Faculty Relations for their support in developing this document.

**MUN SAFE**

**NOTE: this is not for emergencies and is not monitored 24/7**