



Supporting students in distress: quick reference guide

This booklet is designed as a quick reference guide to helping students in distress. Faculty staff, parents or friends may be among the first to notice when a student is having difficulty. By recognising the signs of emotional distress and responding with interest and concern, you can play a vital role in helping the student find appropriate assistance and hopefully resolve the issues at hand.

In an emergency, such as a student experiencing high level distress, threatening self harm or harm to others:

1. Where necessary stay with the student. You may need to ask a co-worker or colleague to assist you in accessing help.
2. Phone the Counselling Service or International Student Support Unit and ask for an immediate and urgent response.
3. If more than one student/staff member is involved, such as in a critical incident on campus, call Security.
4. If a situation occurs after hours contact Security on **9351 3487**.

Useful numbers

Camperdown/Darlington Campus

Security: Services Building G12.
Phone: **9351 3487**

Counselling Service: Level 5,
Jane Foss Russell Building G02.
Phone: **8627 8433**

Cumberland Campus

Counselling Service: Ground Floor,
A Block, C42.
Phone: **9351 9638**

International Student Support Unit:
Level 5, Jane Foss Russell
Building G02. Phone: **8627 8437**

International Student Support Unit:
Ground Floor, A Block, C42.
Phone: **9351 9638**

University Health Service: Level 3,
Wentworth Building G01.
Phone: **9351 3484**
Main Entrance, Holme Building A09.
Phone: **9351 4095**

Security Service: Gatekeeper, C42.
Phone: **9351 9230**

Community resources



The University of Sydney

• Medical, Fire or Police Emergency		000
• Australian Psychological Society	1800 333 497*	
• Alcohol and Drug Info Service	02 9361 8000 or 1800 422 599	
• DOCs Helpline	132 111	
• Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Helpline	1800 200 526	
• Kids Helpline	1800 551 800	
• Lifeline	131 114	
• Mental Health Information Service	9816 5668 / 1800 674 200	
• NSW Poisons Info Centre	131 126	
• NSW Rape Crisis Centre	02 9819 7357	
• Relationships Australia	1300 364 277	
• 24/7 Counselling	1800 424 017	
• Victims Support Line	02 9374 3000 or 1800 633 063	
• Youthline	02 9633 3666	

* Request referral service to be provided with names of 3 psychologists in a requested area.

After hours: if a situation occurs after hours
please contact Security on **9351 3487**

Not all students will be at high risk, but you may have concerns that a student is struggling or their performance/attendance has declined. The following strategies may be useful in managing difficult student issues:

1. **Making a referral:** a first step with students may be to ask them if they are talking to anyone else about their problems. It can also be helpful to be open with students about your own limits of expertise, and to suggest that talking with a counsellor may help them to develop strategies to better cope with their concerns. You can provide the student with the number or details of the Service, or phone on their behalf to help them arrange an initial appointment.

You may also wish to direct students to the web resources available through the Counselling Service website, and the Services for Students website:

Counselling Service website: www.usyd.edu.au/counsel
Services for Students website: www.usyd.edu.au/stuserv

2. **Consultation with staff:** if a student is displaying disruptive or inappropriate behaviour, sending distressing emails, or presenting with more frequent and increasing demands on staff time, a phone consultation with the Counselling Service may be warranted. We can discuss options and strategies to manage complex student issues, as well as providing information about other sources of support on campus and in the community.

You may do this with the student's consent. If this is not provided by the student you may still consult about the situation in a general way without revealing the student's identity.

3. If an **immediate and urgent response** is required to assist with high level distress in a student, please call the Counselling Service, and request an immediate and urgent response.

Camperdown Campus Counselling Service: **8627 8433**
International Student Support Unit: **8627 8437**
Cumberland Campus Student Services: **9351 9638**

After an event you may wish to consult with the Counselling Service about your approach to a difficult situation or discuss it with your supervisor to help you deal with the burden of care for students.

If you are finding that you are thinking or talking about a student more often than you would for any other student, or that you are experiencing strong emotions about the student (such as worry or anger) it may be useful to:

1. speak with a supervisor about your concerns
2. consult with the Counselling Service about your management of the student
3. contact the Case Management Group to arrange access to free confidential counselling for yourself or other staff members.

Case Management Group: **9351 5885** and **9351 4830**

If you have witnessed or been involved in a critical event, please contact the Case Management Group within 12 hours to arrange appropriate assistance, and to notify Occupational Health & Safety in case of any ongoing difficulties as a result of the event.

The information in this guide was developed by the Counselling Service, University of Sydney. For more information see the Counselling Service Website: www.usyd.edu.au/counsel

