



Counselling Services



WHEN TO BE CONCERNED, AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

A Guide to Identifying and Responding to Students in Distress

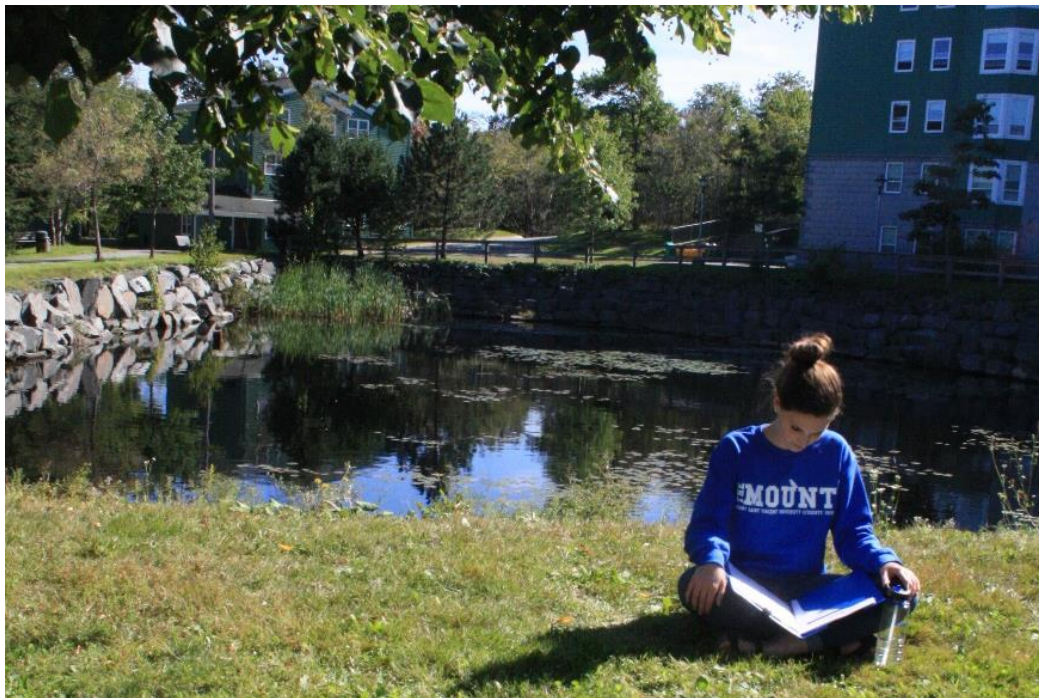
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Introduction

Many people experience emotional distress at some point in their lives. Usually this distress can be resolved by talking difficulties through with families and friends. Most students will cope well with the stresses of academic life, but may need more support.

It is important that these students are helped to engage with services appropriate to their needs.



This guide focuses on helping Mount faculty and staff become better support persons for students in distress by fostering a community, where the mental health and well-being is a shared responsibility of all members of the campus community.

The guide offers a supportive response to students in distress that aims to be humanizing, dignifying, and empowering.

What is Mental Health?

Mental health and well-being are concepts that describe a quality that all human beings possess and experience differently. The Public Health Agency of Canada describes mental health as:

The capacities of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections, and personal dignity.



**Mental health
and well-
being is a
shared
responsibility
of all campus
community
members.**

Recognizing a Student in Distress

As a member of the Mount community, you may at times notice a student that appears to be in distress.

Some of the possible indicators of distress may include:

Academic Indicators

- Increased absence from class
- Considering withdrawing from class or in jeopardy of failing
- Lack of participation
- Missed assignments, exams, or appointments
- Continual seeking of extensions
- Deterioration in quality/quantity of work
- Extreme disorganization
- Inconsistent performance

Behavioural & Emotional Indicators

- Angry or hostile outbursts
- Difficulty concentrating
- More withdrawn or more animated than usual
- Expressions of hopelessness or worthlessness
- Crying or tearfulness
- Expressions of severe anxiety or irritability
- Shakiness, tremors, fidgeting, or pacing

Physical Indicators

- Deterioration in personal hygiene
- Falling asleep in class repeatedly
- Noticeable cuts, bruises, or burns
- Frequent or chronic illness
- Disorganized, rapid or slurred speech
- Unusual inability to make eye contact
- Coming to class bleary-eyed, smelling of alcohol, or appearing intoxicated
- Statements about change in appetite or sleep

Responding to a Student in Distress

1. APPROACH

It is OK to express concern.
Be specific about the behaviour
that worries you.

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

2. LISTEN

Listen non-judgmentally, and
keep an open mind. Meet in a
private place and give your
undivided attention. Be patient.

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

3. SUPPORT

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

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

4. REFER

Provide student with
resources. Offer to make the
call and/or accompany them.

*"Would you like for me to call and
book the appointment for you
while you are here with me."*

Be open and honest with the student about the limits of your ability to help them. If the student appears to be in imminent danger of hurting their self or others, consult **Campus Security** (902-457-6111) or call **Mobile Mental Health Crisis Services** (902-429-8167) or 911 immediately.

If the student discusses thoughts of harm to self or others, call **Counselling Services** (902-457-6567) for support. Do not promise to keep threats to self or others a secret. Discuss campus resources.
If the student is interested, help them make an appointment with Counselling Services.

Situations Requiring Prompt Referral/Reporting

Regardless of the circumstances or context, any reference to harming themselves or someone else must be taken seriously and a mental health professional should be contacted.

Direct or indirect reference to wanting to die/commit suicide

- Expressed feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, or hopelessness
- Expressed thoughts that the world, their family, and friends would be better off without them
- Expressed feelings of powerful guilt
- Expressed desire to die by suicide



MSVU Counselling Services
902-457-6567 (EMF 108)



911



Mobile Crisis Unit
1-800-429-8167



QEII Health Sciences Centre
902-473-2700

Threats and/or disruptive behaviour

- Any type of physical violence causing bodily harm to self or others
- Specific threats of violence or harm
- Student is incoherent
- Student cannot be calmed

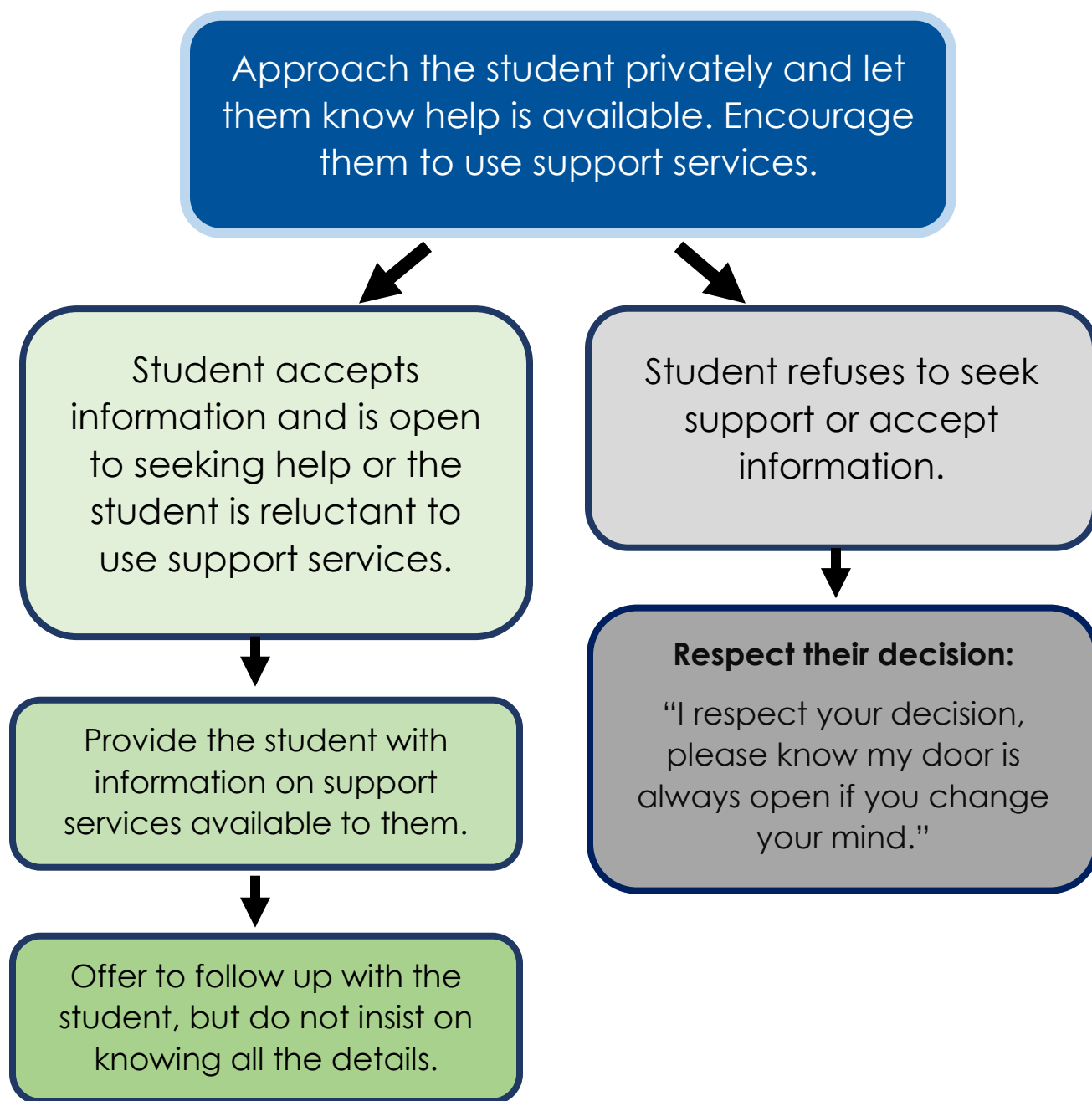


911



MSVU Campus Security
902-457-6111 (24/7)
902-457-6412 (weekdays)

Referring a Student in Distress




Seeking help is a sign of strength and courage rather than weakness, but it can also be very scary and overwhelming. Keep this in mind when approaching a student.
If you're unsure about how to proceed, contact Counselling Services.

On-Campus Resources

Academic Support

Accessibility Services

 902-457-6567

 accessibilityservices@msvu.ca

 E. Margaret Fulton, room 108


Centre for Academic Advising & Student Success


 902-457-6400


 advising@msvu.ca

 Seton Academic Centre,
room 304

Learning Strategist Services

 902-457-6567

 learning.strategist@msvu.ca

 EMF (Library), room 108

Writing Centre


 902-457-6567


 writing@msvu.ca

 EMF (Library), room 205

Well-Being Support

Campus Security

 902-457-6111 (emergency)

 902-457-6412

These phone numbers are also listed on the back of student ID's.

Counselling Services

 902-457-6567

 counselling@msvu.ca

 EMF (Library), room 108

Health Services

 902-457-6567

 counselling@msvu.ca

 EMF (Library), room 108

Peer Support

 peer.support@msvu.ca

Community Resources

211 Nova Scotia	
Phone	211
Website	ns.211.ca
211 is a free, confidential information and referral service that can connect you to thousands of programs and services across Nova Scotia. It is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.	

Adsum House for Women and Children	
Phone	902-423-4443
Website	adsumforwomen.org
A support for women, families, and transgender individuals who are experiencing periods of homelessness.	

Alcoholics Anonymous	
Phone	902-461-1119
Website	aaHalifax.org
Alcoholics Anonymous is an international fellowship of people who have had a drinking problem. There are no age or education requirements. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about their drinking problem.	

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre	
Phone	902-422-4240
Website	avaloncentre.ca
Avalon is committed to confidential, non-judgmental and professional service. Our specialized therapeutic counselling program is available to women & trans/gender non-identified individuals 16 years and older, who have experienced a recent or historical sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, and/or sexual harassment.	

Avalon Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program

Phone 902-425-0122

Website avaloncentre.ca/services/sexual-assault-nurse-examiner/

Some victims/survivors of a sexual assault want to ensure their physical and medical well-being after an immediate sexual assault. The Avalon Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program provides this care while ensuring that the victim/survivor's wants are respected.

Byrony House

Phone 902-423-7183 or 902-422-7650 (Distress Line)

Website bryonyhouse.ca

Byrony House is a 24-bed transition shelter that assists those affected by intimate partner abuse. Our dedicated counsellors are there to answer the 24-hour distress line, provide individual/group supportive counselling, public education, advocacy and referrals. Each year, approximately 470 women and children stay with us.

Halifax Sexual Health Centre

Phone 902-455-9656

Website hshc.ca

We offer a wide-range of clinical services, all provided by our experienced nurses and doctors. Services include: STI testing, anonymous HIV testing, pregnancy tests, transgender health, free condoms and lube, and sexual health education.

Laing House

Phone 902-425-9018

Website lainghouse.org

Laing House is a drop-in centre for youth aged 16-29 living with a mood disorder, psychosis and/or anxiety disorder. Based on peer support, members can meet friends who have gone through similar experiences and support each other as they find wellness.

Mental Health Mobile Crisis Telephone Line

Phone

902-429-8167 or 1-888-429-8167 (toll free)

This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to support callers who present with suicidal thoughts, self-harming thoughts or behaviours, overwhelming anxiety, difficulty coping with distress, psychotic or distorted thinking, depression, substance abuse difficulties, or any other self-identified mental health concerns.

Narcotics Anonymous

Phone

902-789-8323

Website

centralnovaarea.ca

Narcotics Anonymous is a non-profit society for those whom drugs have become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs.

prideHealth

Phone

902-487-0470

Website

nshealth.ca/service-details/prideHealth

prideHealth works to improve access to health services which are safe, coordinated, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate for people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, Two-Spirited, intersex, queer, and questioning.

The Youth Project

Phone

902-429-5429

Website

youthproject.ns.ca

The Youth Project is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to providing support and services to youth, 25 and under, around issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.