

## WORKING WITH STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

Students in your courses or working with you may approach you for help. This is a good sign that they trust you. As instructors and academic staff, sometimes we avoid saying anything because we worry about saying the wrong thing. Simply showing that you care and that you can connect students to the appropriate resources goes a long way and can help students be successful.

### Core Responsibilities of Instructors and Staff:

- To be mindful, knowledgeable, and sensitive to mental health concerns and to be liaisons to resources.
- Instructors and staff should not feel they need to be therapists or solve the challenges faced by students.
- Be attentive to the communication of students in email, office hours, and in other settings, including assignments.



### Essential Steps for Responding:

**If you feel the student is in an immediate crisis and needs immediate help:**

**Call UI Department of Public Safety at 319-335-5022** to request either a wellness check or assistance with next steps, or

**CommUnity Mobile Crisis Response at 855-581-8111.** Mobile Crisis is able to provide in-person response and support to assess a situation and they may be able to transport an individual or provide options for additional care if needed.

**If the student has shared mental health concerns with you via email (for example, depression, anxiety, lingering thoughts of suicide), please do the following:**

1. **Provide a supportive response acknowledging the student's concerns** and include the student's original note to you in your response.

Example response, feel free to tailor to your needs and language:

*"Thank you for your email. I appreciate that you trust me with your struggle with XXX. I am worried about you. I am including the Dean of Students and CLAS Undergraduate Programs on this email as I want to make sure you have the necessary support."*

2. **Please copy (using cc) the following offices to your email reply:**
  - a. For undergraduate students use: [clas-undergrad@uiowa.edu](mailto:clas-undergrad@uiowa.edu) and [dos@uiowa.edu](mailto:dos@uiowa.edu)
  - b. For graduate students, use: [christine-getz@uiowa.edu](mailto:christine-getz@uiowa.edu) and [dos@uiowa.edu](mailto:dos@uiowa.edu)

\*for awareness, you may want to forward a copy of this communication to your DEO and/or DUS

If the student has shared concerns that may not rise to the above levels, please see the [UI Quick Guide for Responding to Distress](#) and feel free to share appropriate resources to the student as needed. For undergraduate students, CLAS UP can be a resource: email [clas-undergrad@uiowa.edu](mailto:clas-undergrad@uiowa.edu) and staff will refer as needed; they may direct instructors to fill out the CLAS academic concern form.

## Information Regarding FERPA

- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits communication about a student of concern in connection with health and safety issues to an appropriate campus resource.
- Anything related to health and safety of a student is a legitimate educational interest to the parties receiving the information (Dean of Students office and CLAS Undergraduate Programs).
- It is imperative in these situations that academic staff members who can provide appropriate assistance are notified and provided with the full information that the faculty member has available.
- More information can be found at <https://dos.uiowa.edu/policies/student-records-policy>.

## Emergency Numbers for Reference:

- 911 for immediate help
- 844-461-5420 [UI Support and Crisis Line](https://mentalhealth.uiowa.edu/student-support-and-crisis-line) - call or text for 24/7 assistance, or use online chat at <https://mentalhealth.uiowa.edu/student-support-and-crisis-line>
- 319-335-5022 [University of Iowa Department of Public Safety \(Police\)](#)
- 319-356-5275 [Iowa City Police](#)
- 319-335-6000 [Rape Victim Advocacy Program](#) for 24/7 assistance
- 855-581-8111 [CommUnity's Mobile Crisis Response](#)
- Mental Health at Iowa Resource page <https://mentalhealth.uiowa.edu/>

Feelings of distress can happen at all hours, and supportive resources are not always immediately available. Outside of traditional office hours, please contact the UI Support and Crisis Line. This will provide you with 24/7 access to a crisis counselor for assistance. You can connect with them by calling or texting 1-844-461-5420 or visiting their website to access online chat (<https://mentalhealth.uiowa.edu/student-support-and-crisis-line>).

