

# SUPPORTING STUDENTS with MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

**OHSU faculty are in a unique position to recognize and demonstrate compassion for students in distress.** Your expression of concern may be a critical factor in supporting a student's academic career and their emotional well-being.

## COMMON SIGNS OF DISTRESS

Look for grouping, frequency, duration, and severity of these behaviors, not just isolated signs or symptoms.

### PHYSICAL

- Stark changes in appearance (e.g. hygiene)
- Agitated behavior
- Excessive fatigue
- Intoxication or hungover
- Visible signs of self-harm
- Disoriented (e.g. groggy, stumbling)
- Signs of recent and significant self-injury

### EMOTIONAL

- Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions, irritability, or unusual apathy
- Angry or hostile outbursts
- Grandiosity or euphoria
- Irritability
- Rapid mood changes
- Hyperactivity or rapid speech
- Withdrawn
- Implying or making a threat to harm self or others

### PERFORMANCE

- Decline in quality of work
- Repeated absences
- Multiple requests for extensions
- Disorganized
- Overly demanding of attention
- Unusual or disproportionate response to feedback

## HOW TO EXPRESS CONCERN

Community members are encouraged to talk directly with a student about their concerns whenever possible. Use the tips below to help you refer a student to support and resources.

**Make the time and space.** Speak in private and without distraction.

**Be direct.** "I've noticed you've been absent from work lately; that's not like you. I am concerned for you."

**Ask open questions.** "How are you doing?", "What has helped in the past when you were feeling stressed or overwhelmed?"

**Listen non-judgmentally.** Don't be too quick to jump in with advice. Allow for pauses.

**Normalize asking for help.** Offer hope and encourage positive outcomes. "I know things are tough right now, but it doesn't mean things will always be this way."

**Refer to campus resources.** Prepare some information in advance about helpful resources..

OHSU staff and faculty may also contact the Student CARE Program for guidance on how to respond to concerns for students. To request a consultation, email CARE Case Manager Britt Hoover at [hooverbr@ohsu.edu](mailto:hooverbr@ohsu.edu).

## STUDENT SUPPORT RESOURCES

Find key support resources available to students at [www.ohsu.edu/education/student-support](http://www.ohsu.edu/education/student-support)



## COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

**Trying to manage a complex situation on your own.** Consult with colleagues, your program chair, or CARE for guidance and collaboration to ensure students receive comprehensive support and resources.

**Not reporting a reportable situation.** When in doubt, consult with OCIC about a situation.

**Providing informal accommodations.** Instead, direct students to register with Office for Student Access.

**Accepting medical documentation.** Instead, encourage students to share their documentation with OSA or Student Health & Wellness.

**Not providing appropriate referrals.** Encourage the student to connect to expert support resources. See Resources (right).

**Offering medical advice or diagnosis.** Encourage the student to seek guidance from SHW or their healthcare provider for any medical concerns or diagnoses.

**Acting as a student's primary mental health support.** Provide empathetic listening and appropriate referrals to ensure students receive the comprehensive support they need to thrive academically and emotionally.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

All OHSU employees (except confidential employees) are required to promptly notify the Office for Civil Rights Investigations & Compliance (OCIC) if they learn of a student experiencing discrimination, harassment or retaliation – including sexual misconduct, sexual assault, and domestic violence.

Do not promise students that you will keep what they share confidential. Students seeking confidential support may speak to CAP, SHW or the Ombuds.

### How to Make a Report

Contact OCIC at 503-494-4158 or [ocic@ohsu.edu](mailto:ocic@ohsu.edu)

This information is current as of April 2024.

## RESOURCES

### Emergency

- Emergency Services: 911
- Campus Public Safety: 503-494-4444

### Urgent

- Crisis Line (24/7): 988
- Student Health & Wellness: 503-494-8665
- CARE Program: Submit online referral

### Student Support Resources

Student Health & Wellness (SHW)  
Baird Hall Garden Level, 503-494-8665

Office for Student Access (OSA)  
[studentaccess@ohsu.edu](mailto:studentaccess@ohsu.edu), 503-494-0082

Confidential Advocacy Program (CAP)  
[CAPsupport@ohsu.edu](mailto:CAPsupport@ohsu.edu), 833-495-2277

Student CARE Program  
Submit an referral at  
[www.ohsu.edu/education/student-care-program](http://www.ohsu.edu/education/student-care-program)



Visit the Student Support Resources website (top left QR codet) for a full list of resources.