



COVID-19 Identify, Assist, Refer Reference Guide for U of T Engineering Faculty & Staff

The Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering is committed to fostering a culture of care and support as students navigate mental health challenges.

Amidst the COVID-19 global pandemic, there are additional challenges and changes to procedure and practice that staff and faculty may encounter when supporting students.

The “Identify, Assist, Refer” approach will help you to recognize when someone is experiencing a mental health challenge and can still provide guidance in offering assistance and facilitating help-seeking behaviours.

This guide outlines additional considerations as you are supporting students navigating mental health challenges in the context of COVID-19 and our collective transition to virtual contact and communication.

REFERENCES:

Adapted from the *University of Toronto's Identify Assist Refer Online Quick Reference Guide*
<http://iar.utoronto.ca>

Suicide Prevention Training, Implement, and Evaluation group at the Center for Practice Innovations at Columbia University/New York State Psychiatric Institute (NYSPI-CPI). (2020, March 25). Telehealth Tips: Managing Suicidal Clients During the COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://mhanys.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NYSPI-CPI-Telehealth-Tips-with-Suicidal-Clients-03-25-20.pdf>

1. IDENTIFY

Being able to identify when someone is experiencing a mental health challenge is an essential first step in getting them connected to helpful resources. There are a number of common indicators of emotional or psychological stress that you can recognize, even in our virtual mediums. These behaviours, thoughts, and feelings might seem:

- Out of character for someone
- To occur all of a sudden
- Like common, everyday responses to life, but persist over a period of time (e.g., multiple days or weeks), occur frequently, or seem to be having a significant impact.

2. ASSIST

If you recognize that someone may be experiencing a mental health challenge, follow up with them and share what you've noticed that makes you feel concerned about their wellbeing. You may also find it helpful to engage in a conversation regarding the emotional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as well. Engaging in a helpful conversation will make for a more appropriate referral.

You can encourage helpful conversations by:

- Choosing a suitable virtual space and time that allows for a meaningful, informative, comfortable and uninterrupted conversation. *Note: You may want to encourage a phone/video call for this conversation but defer to the student's preferences (e.g., they may feel more comfortable with a chat-based conversation because of privacy or safety reasons. Chat-based support can be equally effective).*
- Listening actively without judgment
- Resisting the temptation to give advice or “fix” what you perceive to be the problem
- Not promising to keep secrets
- Instilling a sense of hope by validating their feelings and letting them know that there are resources that many people access and find helpful

3. REFER

Once you understand the challenges the student is experiencing, you can help to identify appropriate resources or services. How you make the referral will vary depending on context, your relationship with the student, and their willingness to engage in further help-seeking — but in general, the steps to an effective referral are:

- Demonstrating that you appreciate their willingness to accept help
- Validating their feelings
- Acknowledging your limitations
- Sharing resource options and preparing them for what to expect from the resources being offered (e.g. intake process, the name of the helping professional, service access information, etc.)
- Following up and offering further referrals

For details on resources to contact when there is a specific safety concern, refer to the section titled [EMERGENCY & URGENT RESOURCES](#) on page 5.

WHAT TO DO IF...

SOMEONE'S BEHAVIOURS, THOUGHTS & FEELINGS RAISE SPECIFIC SAFETY CONCERNS

Behaviours, thoughts and feelings that raise specific safety concerns include:

- Vague or overt references to harming self or others
- Vague or overt references to thoughts of suicide
- Confusion, disorientation, apparent disconnect from reality
- Expressions of hopelessness, helplessness, worthlessness

If you are unsure whether there is a specific safety concern, directly and openly ask the student (e.g., “Have you self-harmed recently?”, “Are you thinking about suicide?”, “Are you feeling confused or disoriented right now?”, “Does your situation make you feel hopeless, helpless or worthless?”).

YOU SUSPECT A SAFETY CONCERN, PRIOR TO INITIATING CONTACT WITH A STUDENT

- Develop a plan — prior to the call — for how to stay on the phone with the student while arranging emergency supports, if needed.
- Request the student’s location (address, apartment number, etc) at the start of the conversation in case you need to contact emergency services.
- Request or make sure you have emergency contact information, should it be required.

YOU’RE CONCERNED THERE IS RISK TO SOMEONE’S SAFETY

- ① **Directly connect** the student to someone in a position to help (i.e., a service listed in the **EMERGENCY OR URGENT RESOURCES** section on page 5). This can be done by making a three-way call to the resource with the student, or virtually accompanying them on the phone to a resource like CAMH’s Psychiatric Emergency Department.

NOTE: If the person disconnects from the conversation because they do not wish to be connected to the resource, continue making the connection without them. The urgent/emergency resource will support you in continuing to support this student.

- ② **Pass along** any critical information that you have gathered. By sharing this information, you are allowing the student to correct any misinformation and provide additional detail.
- ③ **Take direction** from both the person you have connected them to and the student to determine whether it is best to stay on the line or disconnect.
- ④ **Connect with your supervisor** to let them know what happened, determine additional steps and let them know how you are doing.
- ⑤ **Follow-up** with the student to determine if the connection was helpful and/or if any additional resources are required.
- ⑥ **Seek help for yourself.** Consider accessing resources offered through the Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP), if applicable to you. Alternatively, ConnexOntario (1-866-531-2600) is a service that provides system navigation information and could help to find the right mental health service for you.

GENERAL RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

MY STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM (MY SSP) 24/7

1-844-451-9700 or dial 001-416-380-6578 from outside North America
www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc/myssp

Download “MySSP” app from Google Play or App Store

Immediate professional counselling support in 35 languages; ongoing professional counselling support in 146 languages; chat-based support in 6 languages.

GOOD2TALK STUDENT HELPLINE 24/7

1-866-925-5454 or text GOOD2TALKON to 686868
www.good2talk.ca

Professional counselling and trained crisis responders able to offer information and referrals for mental health, addictions and student well-being.

DISTRESS CENTRES 24/7

416-408-4357
www.torontodistresscentre.com

Provides crisis, emotional support and suicide prevention, as well as intervention and postvention services to individuals.

GERSTEIN CENTRE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS LINE 24/7

416-929-5200
www.gersteincentre.org

Provides mental health crisis support, strategies for addressing immediate problems, and connections to ongoing support services.

HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTRE

416-978-8030
www.healthandwellness.utoronto.ca

Virtual programming and appointments. Confidential mental health and physical health services provided by an interdisciplinary team of health professionals.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

416-978-8060
www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as

Virtual programming and appointments. Confidential service that helps students navigate their disability and its related barriers; provides professional and peer support.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION & SUPPORT CENTRE

416-978-2266
www.thesvpcentre.utoronto.ca

Virtual appointments. Facilitates access to support, services and accommodations for students, staff and faculty members who have experienced sexual violence.

COMMUNITY SAFETY OFFICE

416-978-1485
www.communitysafety.utoronto.ca

Virtual appointments. Responds to U of T students, staff, and faculty members who have personal safety concerns.

HOUSING

416-978-8045
www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hs

Virtual programming and appointments. Offers information, resources and support to meet student housing goals.

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

416-978-2564
www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/cie

Virtual programming and appointments. Support for U of T students abroad and international students.

INDIGENOUS STUDENT SERVICES

416-978-1893
www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/fnh

Virtual programming and appointments. Provides culturally relevant services to Indigenous students in support of academic success, personal growth and leadership development.

SEXUAL & GENDER DIVERSITY OFFICE

416-946-5624
www.sgdo.utoronto.ca

Virtual programming and appointments. Develops partnerships to build supportive learning and working communities at U of T by working towards equity and challenging discrimination.

MULTI-FAITH CENTRE

416-946-3120
www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/mf

Virtual programming. Supports the spiritual well-being of students, staff and faculty and increases understanding of and respect for religious beliefs and practices.

EMERGENCY & URGENT RESOURCES

If you identify indicators that raise specific safety concerns, including intentions to harm themselves or others, the situation needs to be treated with urgency. Connect the student to someone who is able to help, even when they are unwilling to access these resources themselves.

EMERGENCY

CAMPUS POLICE

416-978-2222
21 Sussex Ave., Suite 100
www.campuspolice.utoronto.ca

Dedicated to creating a safe, secure and equitable environment for all community members.

Call 911 in situations requiring immediate police, fire or medical response to preserve life or property.

To ensure prompt service, contact Campus Police after calling 911.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Dial: 911
www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/phone/911

For life-threatening emergencies or incidents occurring in the moment where you need police, fire, or ambulance. If responding on campus also contact Campus Police to ensure prompt service.

CAMH PSYCHIATRIC EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

416-535-8501
250 College St.
www.camh.ca/en/your-care/programs-and-services/emergency-department

Emergency service for adults with mental health and substance issues.

URGENT

STUDENT CRISIS RESPONSE, PROGRESS & SUPPORT

416-946-7111
Note: after hours, leave a voicemail for return the following business day

Resource for staff and faculty who are concerned about a student who is overwhelmed or in crisis, exhibiting disturbing behaviour, or referencing suicide or violence.

MY STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM (MY SSP)

1-844-451-9700 (North America)
001-416-380-6578 (outside North America)
www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc/myssp

Download “MySSP” app from [Google Play](#) or [App Store](#)

Immediate professional counselling support in 35 languages and chat-based counselling support in 6 languages.

HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTRE

416-978-8030
www.healthandwellness.utoronto.ca

Virtual appointments. Confidential mental health and physical health services provided by an interdisciplinary team of health professionals.

YOUR IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR

Whether a referral is made or not, if you are supporting someone as a result of your role, it might be helpful to inform your supervisor or other appropriate contact within your unit. This could help to facilitate coordinated care as well as to help ensure you feel supported.

Please have the following details at your fingertips:

- Supervisor’s Name: _____
- Supervisor’s Contact: _____