



## COVID-19 **Identify, Assist, Refer** Reference Guide for U of T Engineering Students

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 needs to consider when supporting one another.

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.

To contribute a U of T Engineering mental health resource to this guide or to [www.uofteng.ca/mentalhealth](http://www.uofteng.ca/mentalhealth), please email: [mentalhealth@engineering.utoronto.ca](mailto:mentalhealth@engineering.utoronto.ca)

Last updated April 2021

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### 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).*
- Validating their feelings
- 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:

- Acknowledging your limitations
- Sharing resource options
- Explaining what they can expect from the resources being offered, 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 6.**

# 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 initiating contact. This may involve reaching out to a counsellor at **My SSP** to discuss your approach and the resources you may offer.

### DID YOU KNOW?

U of T Engineering's Mental Health Programs Officer **Melissa Fernandes** is available to help you intervene in any of the scenarios above. During business hours, please email [mentalhealth@engineering.utoronto.ca](mailto:mentalhealth@engineering.utoronto.ca). For after-hours support, contact **My SSP**.

## 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 6). 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 or disconnect/leave.
- 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.** Take the time and space needed to take care of yourself as you support others. All of the resources listed in this document are available for you too!

# U of T ENGINEERING RESOURCES

U of T Engineering is committed to fostering a culture of care and support. Below are Engineering-specific resources to support mental wellness and assist students in need. Read more: [www.uofteng.ca/mentalhealth](http://www.uofteng.ca/mentalhealth)

## FIRST-YEAR ADVISORS

[www.uoft.me/fyo](http://www.uoft.me/fyo)

A team of advisors, including **Leslie Grife, Jennifer Fabro, Todd Le Blanc** and **Hannah de Haan** support engineering students throughout their first year. **JesusMiracle Chidika, First Year Advisor, Intercultural Learning & Experience** supports first-year international students. Students can book virtual appointments and engage in FYO Live Chat. First-year EngSci students should connect with **Stephen Johns** (for domestic students) or **Justina Lee** (for international students).

## DEPARTMENTAL UNDERGRADUATE ADVISORS

[www.uoft.me/engadvisors](http://www.uoft.me/engadvisors)

Provides support to engineering students in second, third and fourth year within academic departments on personal, career and academic matters. Follow the link for a full list of advisors.

## DEPARTMENTAL GRADUATE ADMINISTRATORS

[www.uoft.me/gradadmin](http://www.uoft.me/gradadmin)

Provides support to grad students within engineering academic units. Follow the link for a full listing of advisors across the departments.

## LEARNING STRATEGIST

**Shahad Abdunour**

[www.uoft.me/englearningstrategist](http://www.uoft.me/englearningstrategist)

Offers appointments and programing to assess and enhance engineering undergrads' academic skills related to task-management, critical thinking, test/exam prep and coping with academic-related stress and anxiety.

## FINANCIAL AID ADVISING

**Pierina Fillipone**

[www.uoft.me/engfinance](http://www.uoft.me/engfinance)

Students can access a collection of resources around financial aid, scholarships, financial planning and taxes at the URL above. Students can also email questions to: [awards@engineering.utoronto.ca](mailto:awards@engineering.utoronto.ca)

## INCLUSION & TRANSITION ADVISOR

**Mikhail Burke**

[www.uoft.me/inclusionadvisor](http://www.uoft.me/inclusionadvisor)

Assists students who may be experiencing barriers to their transition into and inclusion within the Faculty.

## HEALTH & WELLNESS ENGINEERING COUNSELLOR

[www.uoft.me/wellnessadvisor](http://www.uoft.me/wellnessadvisor)

Through self-referral (416-978-8030) or a referral by a first-year or departmental advisor, students can access mental health counselling care options with the Engineering Counsellor or other clinicians at Health & Wellness.

## ON-LOCATION ADVISOR, ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

[www.uofteng.ca/onlocationaccessibility](http://www.uofteng.ca/onlocationaccessibility)

Students registered with U of T's Accessibility Services can access services including the On-location Accessibility Advisor. First-year and departmental advisors can assist students in completing the Intake Package if required.

## MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS OFFICER

**Melissa Fernandes**

[www.uoft.me/MHPO](http://www.uoft.me/MHPO)

Builds capacity to support student mental health and well-being by offering mental health programs and training, conducting research and offering best practice insights.

## EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (EDI) INITIATIVES

[www.uoft.me/EDI](http://www.uoft.me/EDI)

Provides resources and raises awareness to realize our commitment to equity, diversity and human rights. The Faculty's incident disclosure form can be accessed at [uoft.me/engdisclosure](http://uoft.me/engdisclosure)

## SKULE MENTAL WELLNESS

[www.wellness.skule.ca](http://www.wellness.skule.ca)

Student group that advocates for mental health and wellness within U of T Engineering. They create student resources, events, workshops and activities.

## GECoS MENTAL WELLNESS COMMISSION

[www.uoft.me/gecoswellness](http://www.uoft.me/gecoswellness)

The Graduate Engineering Council of Students (GECoS) Mental Wellness Commission provides advocacy, education and socials.

## GRADUATE PEER AND CAREER SUPPORT (GRAD PACS)

[www.uoft.me/gradpacs](http://www.uoft.me/gradpacs)

Helps engineering grad students navigate resources, build skills and find community.

# GENERAL RESOURCES

**24/7** Available 24/7 (all others open during business hours; check online for details)

## **24/7** MY STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM (MY SSP)

1-844-451-9700 or dial 001-416-380-6578 from outside North America  
[www.uoft.me/myssp](http://www.uoft.me/myssp)

App Downloads: [Android](#) | [Apple](#)

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

## **24/7** GOOD2TALK STUDENT HELPLINE

1-866-925-5454 or text GOOD2TALKON to 686868  
[www.good2talk.ca](http://www.good2talk.ca)

Professional counselling and trained crisis responders; offers info and referrals for mental health, addictions and student well-being.

## **24/7** DISTRESS CENTRES

416-408-4357  
[www.torontodistresscentre.com](http://www.torontodistresscentre.com)

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

## **24/7** GERSTEIN CENTRE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS LINE

416-929-5200  
[www.gersteincentre.org](http://www.gersteincentre.org)

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

## COMMUNITY SAFETY OFFICE

416-978-1485  
[www.communitysafety.utoronto.ca](http://www.communitysafety.utoronto.ca)

Virtual appointments. Responds to students, staff and faculty who have personal safety concerns.

## STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE

[www.mentalhealth.utoronto.ca](http://www.mentalhealth.utoronto.ca)

Access to services, events and tool-kits around mental health, including access to Navi, a virtual mental health navigator: [www.uoft.me/navi](http://www.uoft.me/navi)

## HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTRE

416-978-8030  
[www.healthandwellness.utoronto.ca](http://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](http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as)

Virtual programming and appointments. Confidential service that helps students navigate their disability and its related barriers.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION & SUPPORT CENTRE

416-978-2266  
[www.svpscentre.utoronto.ca](http://www.svpscentre.utoronto.ca)

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

## ACADEMIC SUCCESS

[www.uoft.me/academicsuccess](http://www.uoft.me/academicsuccess)

Appointments, workshops and resources designed to support the academic success of undergraduate and graduate students.

## HOUSING

416-978-8045  
[www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hs](http://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](http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/cie)

Virtual programming and appointments. Support for students abroad and international students.

## INDIGENOUS STUDENT SERVICES

416-978-1893  
[www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/fnh](http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/fnh)

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

## SEXUAL & GENDER DIVERSITY OFFICE

416-946-5624  
[www.sgdo.utoronto.ca](http://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](http://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. If they are unwilling to access these resources, you can contact these services to determine next best steps. If you fear for their safety as a result of engaging these resources, determine safer options and/or the ways you can enact the **5-Ds of Bystander Intervention**.

## EMERGENCY

**24/7** **CAMPUS POLICE**  
416-978-2222  
21 Sussex Ave., Suite 100  
[www.campuspolice.utoronto.ca](http://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.

**24/7** **CAMH PSYCHIATRIC EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT**  
416-535-8501 | 250 College St.  
[www.camh.ca/en/your-care/programs-and-services/emergency-department](http://www.camh.ca/en/your-care/programs-and-services/emergency-department)

Emergency service for adults with mental health and substance issues.

**24/7** **EMERGENCY SERVICES**  
Dial: 911 | [www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/phone/911](http://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.

## URGENT

**24/7** **MY STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM (MY SSP)**  
1-844-451-9700 (North America)  
001-416-380-6578 (outside North America)  
[www.uoft.me/myssp](http://www.uoft.me/myssp)

App Downloads: [Android](#) | [Apple](#)

Immediate professional counselling support in 35 languages and chat-based counselling support in 4 languages.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTRE**  
416-978-8030  
[www.healthandwellness.utoronto.ca](http://www.healthandwellness.utoronto.ca)

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

**MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS OFFICER**  
[mentalhealth@engineering.utoronto.ca](mailto:mentalhealth@engineering.utoronto.ca)

Melissa provides mental health resource navigation assistance to students supporting their peers through challenge and crises. When you contact Melissa with concerns about a fellow student, she will help ensure that relevant resources are provided and appropriate follow-up occurs.

### YOUR IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR

Whether a referral is made or not, if you are supporting someone as a result of your role as a student leader or employee at U of T Engineering, it might be helpful to inform your supervisor. This could help to facilitate coordinated care as well as to help ensure you feel supported.

Please have the following details ready:

- Supervisor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Supervisor's Contact: \_\_\_\_\_