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, please email: mentalhealth@engineering.utoronto.ca

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REFERENCES:

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

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.

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

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.

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!

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. For after-hours support, contact My SSP.
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

FIRST-YEAR ADVISORS
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 Chiadika, 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

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

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

LEARNING STRATEGIST
Shahad Abdulnour
www.uoft.me/englearningstrategist

Offers appointments and programming 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

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

MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS OFFICER
Melissa Fernandes
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.

INCLUSION & TRANSITION ADVISOR
Mikhail Burke
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

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

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.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (EDI) INITIATIVES
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

SKULE MENTAL WELLNESS
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

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

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

**MY STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM (MY SSP)**
1-844-451-9700 or dial 001-416-380-6578 from outside North America
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.

**GOOD2TALK STUDENT HELPLINE**
1-866-925-5454 or text GOOD2TALKON to 686868
www.good2talk.ca

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

**DISTRESS CENTRES**
416-408-4357
www.torontodistresscentre.com

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

**GERSTEIN CENTRE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS LINE**
416-929-5200
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

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

**STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE**
www.mentalhealth.utoronto.ca

Access to services, events and toolkits around mental health, including access to Navi, a virtual mental health navigator: www.uoft.me/navi

**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.

**SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION & SUPPORT CENTRE**
416-978-2266
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

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

**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 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 and personal growth.

**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. 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.

**U OF T CAMPUS SAFETY**
**– SPECIAL CONSTABLE SERVICE**
416-978-2222
21 Sussex Ave., Suite 100
[www.campussafety.utoronto.ca](http://www.campussafety.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 Safety after calling 911.

**CAMH PSYCHIATRIC EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT**
416-535-8501 | 250 College St.

Emergency service for adults with mental health and substance issues.

**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 Safety – Special Constable Service to ensure prompt service.

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