

# MENTAL HEALTH & BASIC NEEDS RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS



Faculty and staff are in a unique position to demonstrate care and compassion for students in distress. The purpose of this folder is to help you recognize potential symptoms of distress and identify appropriate campus resources to refer students to.

## MESSAGE TO FACULTY AND STAFF

*When faced with academic and life challenges, students may feel alone, isolated, and even hopeless. These feelings can easily disrupt academic performance and may lead to dysfunctional coping and other serious consequences. As a result of your frequent and prolonged contact, you may be the first person to notice a student in distress. As part of the community college mission, it is important that we act with compassion. Keep in mind that students exhibiting concerning behaviors may be having difficulties in other areas of their lives. Students sometimes feel that they can't share their struggles with family and friends but may be comfortable doing so with faculty or staff. By expressing concern, you may help save a student's academic career or even their life.*



## INDICATORS OF DISTRESS: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

### ACADEMIC INDICATORS

- Sudden decline in quality of work/grades
- Repeated absences
- Disorganized performance
- Multiple requests for extensions
- Disengagement through failure to hand in assignments, missing exams, and lack of participation
- Overly demanding of faculty/staff time and attention
- Bizarre content in writing/presentations
- Increased need for personal (rather than academic) counseling

### PSYCHOLOGICAL INDICATORS

- Self-disclosure of personal distress, including family problems, financial difficulties, suicidal thoughts, grief
- Unusual/disproportional emotional response to events
- Excessive tearfulness
- Panic reactions
- Irritability or unusual apathy
- Verbal abuse (e.g. taunting, badgering, intimidation)

### SAFETY RISK INDICATORS

- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Physical violence (shoving, grabbing, assault, use of weapon)
- Implying or making a direct threat to harm self or others
- Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, rage, worthlessness, isolation, despair, acting out, suicidal ideations, violent behaviors, or other "cries for help"
- Stalking or harassing
- Communicating threats via email, texting, phone calls

### PHYSICAL INDICATORS

- Marked changes in physical appearance (deterioration in grooming or hygiene, significant weight gain/loss)
- Excessive fatigue or sleep disturbance
- Intoxication, hangovers, smelling of alcohol
- Disoriented or "out of it"
- Garbled, tangential, disconnected, or slurred speech

## AWARENESS

Students in distress may be struggling with academic or personal challenges.

Remember that you are in a unique position to identify students who may be in need of help.

## COMMUNICATION

Sharing your concern directly with the student and reaching out to campus / community resources are important first steps in the helping process.

## ENGAGEMENT

Students may not be aware of what resources are available or how to find help. It's okay to check in with students to see how they're doing. Demonstrating a culture of care and compassion strengthens the campus community.



## COMMUNICATING YOUR CONCERNS WITH THE STUDENT

### ACTION

### EXAMPLE

Address the observable behavior



I have noticed a change in the quality of work

Communicate your care for the student's success



As your professor, I care about you and your success

Identify your concern related to recent events



I am worried about how [inset behavior] is affecting you

Encourage the student to consult with a counselor



I am wondering if you would be willing to consult with the **MC Department of Counseling Services**

Destigmatize help seeking and counseling utilization



Students often find it helpful to speak with an objective listener

Remind the student they can access counseling services



The **Department of Counseling Services** is a free and confidential resource for students

Offer to connect student with the **Department of Counseling Services**



We can call the **Department of Counseling Services** now or I can walk with you to the office

## DO ...



- Make time and space available to speak to students
- Use empathy and active listening skills
- Connect students with available resources
- Ask for additional help if needed

## DON'T ...



- Make promises you can't keep
- Try to "fix" everything
- Pass judgement or dismiss the student's needs
- Wait to refer if you are concerned about a student



## MIDDLESEX COLLEGE STUDENT RESOURCES

### **Aggression or Threats of Violence**

- Middlesex College Police: 732-906-2500

### **Alcohol or Drug Concern**

- Middlesex College; Department of Counseling Services: 732-906-2546

### **Anxiety, Depression, or Intense Emotion**

- Middlesex College; Department of Counseling Services: 732-906-2546

### **Disability or Special Learning Needs**

- Middlesex College; Disability Services: 732-906-2546

### **Discrimination and/or Harassment**

- Middlesex College; Student Life Office: 732-906-2569

### **Food Insecurity**

- Middlesex College; Food Pantry: [alyons@middlesexcc.edu](mailto:alyons@middlesexcc.edu), College Center, Room 170

### **Medical Emergency: Dial 9-1-1**

### **Sexual Misconduct**

- Middlesex College; Title IX Coordinator; 732-906-4166, Chambers Hall, Room 232
- Middlesex County Center for Empowerment: 1-877-665-7273



## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

### **Suicidal Thoughts**

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255
- University Behavioral Health Care: 732-235-5700

### **Child Care Assistance**

- New Jersey Childcare Assistance Program: [www.childcarenj.gov](http://www.childcarenj.gov)

### **Eviction Protection**

- Housing Help NJ: [www.housinghelpnj.org](http://www.housinghelpnj.org)

### **Food Assistance, Cash Assistance, and Health**

- Insurance Assistance:  
New Jersey Helps: [www.njhelps.org](http://www.njhelps.org)



## STUDENT STATEWIDE AND NATIONAL RESOURCES

### **Trevor Project: 1-866-488-7386**

Crisis counselors are trained to answer calls, chats, or texts from young people in the LGBTQ community who reach out on this free, confidential, and secure 24/7 service when they are struggling with issues such as coming out, LGBTQ identity, depression, and suicide.

### **New Jersey Vet2Vet: 866-838-7654**

Provides 24/7 specialized services by veterans. You can call, chat online, text or contact us on social media @njvet2vet

### **NJ Hopeline: 1-855-654-6735**

Provides support, assessment, and, if needed, intervention in the most cooperative and least restrictive manner to New Jersey residents in emotional distress and suicidal crisis.

### **National Crisis Text Line: 741741**

Text HOME to 741741 from anywhere in the United States, anytime. Crisis Text Line is here for any crisis. A live, trained Crisis Counselor receives the text and responds, all from a secure online platform.

### **NJ Connect for Recovery: 855-652-3737**

Free, confidential call line focused on helping family members and friends coping with a loved one's substance use disorder.

### **Mental Health Cares: 1-866-202-HELP (4357)**

MentalHealthCares is New Jersey's behavioral health information and referral service. Our staff of specialists uses their experience and understanding of the behavioral health system to provide callers information and connect them to the behavioral health and services they need, such as legal, housing, employment, rehabilitation, inpatient and outpatient, self-help and more.

### **Peer Recovery Warmline: 877-292-5588**

Peer Recovery Warmline (PRW) is a peer-run service providing ongoing telephone support to mental health consumers as they work towards their recovery.

### **211**

NJ 211 provides live assistance 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Services are free, confidential, and multilingual.

*There are several ways to reach these services:*

- ✓ By phone (simply dial 2-1-1);
- ✓ via text (send your zip code to 898-211);
- ✓ e-mail ([info@nj211.org](mailto:info@nj211.org)); ✓ or chat online.

Whichever method you choose, you will be communicating with a community resource specialist who has been educated about federal, state, and local systems created to help people who are struggling. Our specialists have access to a resource database of over 8,800 community programs and services that assist people who need help with life's most basic needs... things like food, utilities, affordable housing, rental assistance, mental and physical health, substance use disorders, childcare, senior needs, legal assistance, transportation, disability services and so much more.



# HELPING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

## Confidentiality

Information that is shared with professional counselors during sessions will, in the majority of cases, not be shared with others outside of the department.

Students are made aware of the limits to confidentiality.

**These exceptions include:**

1. Situations where there is evidence that the student or someone else's safety is in danger.
2. Legal situations in which court orders are presented.
3. In addition, sometimes the professional staff members of the Department of Counseling Services share information with each other in an effort to provide the best possible service to the campus community.

## Tips for Recognizing Distressed Students

At one time or another, everyone feels sad, upset, or depressed. The following may help to identify some symptoms which, over a period of time, may suggest that the problems the person is dealing with require intervention.

- Marked change in academic performance or behavior
- Unusual behavior or appearance
- Reference to stressful life events
- Reference to suicide, death, or homicide

## What Can You Do? Basic Guidelines

If you choose to approach a student you are concerned about or if a student reaches out to you for help with personal problems, here are some suggestions that might make the opportunity more comfortable for you and more helpful for the student.

**Listen:** Listen to thoughts and feelings in a sensitive, non-threatening way.

**Talk:** Express your concern in behavioral and non-judgmental terms

**Avoid:** Judging, evaluating, and criticizing even if the student asks your opinion

**Maintain:** Clear and consistent boundaries and expectations

**Refer:** Do not promise confidentiality, instead encourage the student to seek help by making a referral to Counseling

Services, it is important to point out that:

1. Help is available.
2. Counselors are well trained and can provide expert assistance in ways that you cannot.
3. Seeking help is a sign of strength and courage rather than a sign of weakness or failure.

## Referral & Consultation

Counselors are available to consult with faculty and administrators at any time during normal business hours (Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm) and during the evening by appointment. In the case of an emergency, counselors will make immediate adjustments to their schedule to see a student in crisis, or consult with a faculty or staff member. In order to initiate this process:

1. Call or escort the student to the Department of Counseling Services (Edison Hall, 100; 732-906-2546) Briefly explain to front desk receptionist that you have a student that you are very concerned about and you would like to speak to a counselor.
2. Without going into personal details explain the nature of your concern.

**Examples:**

- I am concerned for the student's safety.
  - The student has been behaving differently and unusual.
  - The student has been misbehaving in class.
  - The student disclosed information that is very concerning
  - The student confided in me and I know that I am not equipped to address his or her needs
3. The staff member will immediately identify a counselor with whom you can consult.

## For Faculty & Staff

You are in a unique position to identify and help students who are in distress. This may be particularly true for students who cannot or will not turn to family or friends for assistance. Remember, anyone who is seen as caring and trustworthy may be a potential resource in times of trouble. Your expression of interest and concern is a critical factor in helping struggling students establish a connection with the resources that can assist them. Thank you for all you do to help our students strive for success.