



Recognize — Respond — Refer: Suicide Prevention Training

Recognize

Most people experiencing suicidal thoughts show outward signs that may alert you that they are in distress. Although some individuals might not show any signs, it's important to watch for common warning signs.

Suicide Warning Signs

- Referencing or talking about suicide or a desire to not live anymore
- Out-of-character behavior, such as giving away possessions
- Lowered self-worth or confidence; feeling like a burden; feeling hopeless
- Not showing up for obligations; isolating
- Changes in mood
- Eating or sleeping more or less
- Relationship difficulties; recent breakup or falling out
- Less attention to personal hygiene
- Using alcohol or drugs more frequently

Respond

Once you are in a private, comfortable place, initiate a check-in:

- Name the specific warning signs you have recognized.
- Ask permission to check-in further.

Tips for Responding

- **Express concern directly and honestly.** It is more important to demonstrate that you care and to use active listening skills than to avoid a conversation. Name what you have recognized and ask to check in further.
- **Listen without judgment.** Listen with the intent to really understand what the other person is saying and feeling. Don't minimize or dismiss their experiences. Pauses and silence are okay.
- **Demonstrate empathy.** Thank them for sharing. Acknowledge their experiences and concerns as valid.
- **Offer hope.** Reassure that help is available and ask permission to share resources. Let them know their life is important to you.
- **Ask about suicide if you notice warning signs.** This shows that you are ready to listen to their feelings and open to support them. Asking directly about thoughts of suicide can also help you determine the urgency of the situation.
- **Reach out for help if necessary.** Do not be sworn to secrecy. You can always consult the 24/7 UHS Mental Health Crisis Line (608-265-5600, option 9).

Refer

For referrals to be helpful, they should ideally:

- Be responsive to student needs, as understood by the student
- Be collaborative, not coercive
- Be responsive to student beliefs and identities

See the back of this page for examples of referrals to resources based on the level of urgency.

Access the Trainings



Referring Students Based on Level of Urgency

FIRST: Determine Level of Urgency			
Non-Urgent	Urgent	Uncertain Urgency	Emergency
<p>Does not require prompt action, but intervention is still recommended; can wait at least until the next day.</p> <p>Example: A student is struggling with academics and depression but does not have thoughts of suicide.</p> <p>▼</p>	<p>Requiring prompt action; may turn into an emergency if not addressed quickly; needs to be addressed today.</p> <p>Example: A student states that they have stockpiled medication at home and are considering attempting suicide.</p> <p>▼</p>	<p>It is unclear how urgent the situation is, due to lack of information (e.g., student declines checking in) or confusing information.</p> <p>Examples: Student states they are “fine,” but exhibits multiple warning signs for suicide. Student reports having thoughts of suicide over the last few days, but currently are not having those thoughts.</p> <p>▼</p>	<p>An immediate threat to health or life.</p> <p>Example: A student has a weapon and is threatening to harm themselves or you.</p> <p>▼</p>
THEN: Take These Steps			
<p>Non-Urgent</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share information about UHS services, including scheduling an Access Appointment with Mental Health Services. 2. If you are still concerned or want support, consult with the Office of Student Assistance and Support (osas@studentaffairs.wisc.edu) about additional resources that may be helpful. 	<p>Urgent</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage the student to call the 24/7 UHS Mental Health Crisis Line (608-265-5600, option 9) and/or the Suicide & Crisis Line (988). If you're with the student, offer to call with them, or stay with the student until they are connected to the crisis line. 2. Consult with the 24/7 UHS Mental Health Crisis Line by calling 608-265-5600, option 9. 3. Call the Office of Student Assistance and Support at 608-263-5700 to receive support or request follow-up with the student. 	<p>Uncertain</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult with the 24/7 UHS Mental Health Crisis Line by calling 608-265-5600, option 9. 2. Share information about UHS services and mental health resources on campus with student. 	<p>Emergency</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Call 911.* 2. Consult with the 24/7 Mental Health Crisis Line after connecting with emergency resources (608-265-5600, option 9.) <p><i>* Involving law enforcement is not an option that feels safe, comfortable, or accessible for everyone, and should be reserved for emergencies.</i></p>