

# HELPING BEARS IN DISTRESS

A quick reference guide for recognizing, responding to, and referring distressed students.



WashU Cares specializes in connecting students to mental, medical, financial, and academic resources by using supportive case management. We seek to empower students to be successful through life's challenges and have ownership of their experiences. Our services are designed to support Danforth Campus students.

If you feel concerned about a student who may need help connecting to resources, we accept referrals from all students, faculty, and staff. Please use the form on the WashU Cares website located at [washucares.wustl.edu](http://washucares.wustl.edu), and a Case Manager\* will reach out to you to get more information about your concern.

*\*Case Manager responses are dependent on caseloads and reports—this can result in delayed outreach to staff, faculty, and community members as we prioritize reaching out to the reported student.*

## CAMPUS RESOURCES

### Habif Health and Wellness Center:

#### Medical Health Services

[habif.wustl.edu](http://habif.wustl.edu)  
314-935-6666  
[habifinfo@wustl.edu](mailto:habifinfo@wustl.edu)

#### Counseling and Psychological Services

[students.wustl.edu/mental-health-services](http://students.wustl.edu/mental-health-services)  
314-935-6695  
[MHSCoordinator@wustl.edu](mailto:MHSCoordinator@wustl.edu)

### WashU Cares

[students.wustl.edu/washu-cares/](http://students.wustl.edu/washu-cares/)  
314-935-3566  
[caresteam@wustl.edu](mailto:caresteam@wustl.edu)

### Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center (RSVP)

[rsvp.wustl.edu](http://rsvp.wustl.edu)  
314-935-3445  
[rsvpcenter@wustl.edu](mailto:rsvpcenter@wustl.edu)

### Residential Life

[reslife.wustl.edu](http://reslife.wustl.edu)  
314-935-5050  
[reslife@wustl.edu](mailto:reslife@wustl.edu)

### Center for Diversity and Inclusion

[cdi.wustl.edu](http://cdi.wustl.edu)  
314-935-7535  
[diversityandinclusion@wustl.edu](mailto:diversityandinclusion@wustl.edu)

### Disability Resources

[disability.wustl.edu](http://disability.wustl.edu)  
314-935-5970  
[disabilityresources@wustl.edu](mailto:disabilityresources@wustl.edu)

### Student Transitions & Family Programs

[transitions.wustl.edu](http://transitions.wustl.edu)  
314-935-5040; TF: 844-935-5040  
[transitions@wustl.edu](mailto:transitions@wustl.edu)

### Student Financial Services

[financialaid.wustl.edu/contact-us/](http://financialaid.wustl.edu/contact-us/)  
314-935-5900  
[financial@wustl.edu](mailto:financial@wustl.edu)

### Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS)

[oiss.wustl.edu](http://oiss.wustl.edu)  
314-935-5910  
[oiss@wustl.edu](mailto:oiss@wustl.edu)

### Office for Religious, Spiritual and Ethical Life

[students.wustl.edu/ORSEL](http://students.wustl.edu/ORSEL)  
314-935-5257  
[callista.isabelle@wustl.edu](mailto:callista.isabelle@wustl.edu)

### Student Conduct and Community Standards

[studentconduct.wustl.edu](http://studentconduct.wustl.edu)  
314-935-7296  
[studentconduct@wustl.edu](mailto:studentconduct@wustl.edu)

### The Gender Equity and Title IX Compliance Office

[titleix.wustl.edu](http://titleix.wustl.edu)  
314-935-3118  
[titleix@wustl.edu](mailto:titleix@wustl.edu)

### Career Center

[careercenter.wustl.edu](http://careercenter.wustl.edu)  
314-935-5930  
[careers@wustl.edu](mailto:careers@wustl.edu)

### The Learning Center

[ctl.wustl.edu/learningcenter](http://ctl.wustl.edu/learningcenter)  
314-935-2066  
[learningcenter@wustl.edu](mailto:learningcenter@wustl.edu)

# INDICATORS OF DISTRESS

SEE SOMETHING. SAY SOMETHING. DO SOMETHING.

A person's behavior, especially if it changes over time, may be an indicator of distress. You might be the first person to recognize signs of distress, especially if you have frequent or prolonged contact with a student or colleague.

**Trust your instincts if someone leaves you feeling worried, alarmed, or threatened.**



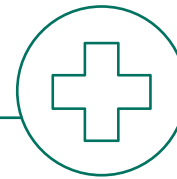
## SAFETY INDICATORS

- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Implied or direct threats to harm self or others
- Stalking or harassing
- Your gut feeling that there is a safety risk



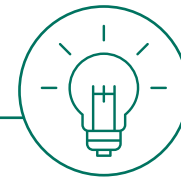
## EMOTIONAL INDICATORS

- Self disclosure of distress (relationship/family issues, grief, suicidal thoughts, etc.)
- Excessive tearfulness, worry, anxiety, panic, fear, irritability, or apathy
- Extreme mood changes; extreme highs and lows
- Verbal abuse
- Concern from peers



## PHYSICAL INDICATORS

- Marked changes in physical appearance, grooming, hygiene, or weight
- Excessive fatigue or sleep disturbances
- Intoxication, disorientation, or smelling of alcohol and/or other drugs

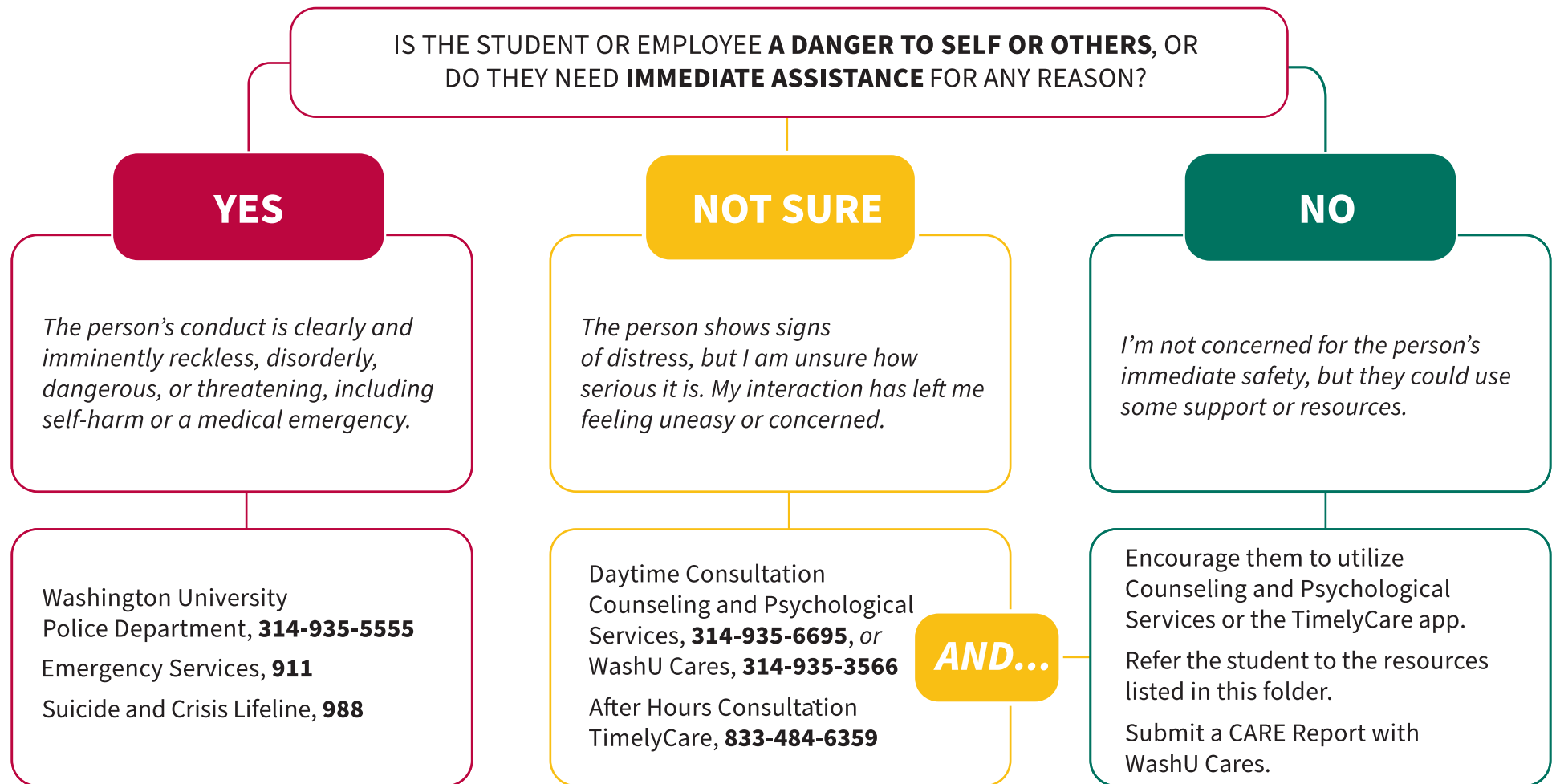


## ACADEMIC/WORK INDICATORS

- Sudden decline in quality of work or grades
- Avoiding friends or social situations
- Problems concentrating or learning
- Repeated absences
- Bizarre content in writings or presentations
- Repeated classroom disruptions

# RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Follow the chart below to best determine who to contact when faced with a student or colleague who is distressed, disruptive, or in crisis.



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## DISTRESSED BEHAVIOR

- Let the individual know you are concerned about them and would like to help.
- Allow them to discuss their thoughts and feelings, which often helps relieve pressure.
- Ask about suicide directly: “Are you thinking about suicide or killing yourself?”
- Really listen to their answer, and let them know you care.
- Avoid offering lots of advice or solutions.
- For students during business hours, give them information about counseling services. Call Counseling and Psychological Services first, and then, if the student is willing and you are comfortable, you can offer to walk the student over or provide a space for them to have a private virtual appointment.
- For students outside of business hours, give them information about TimelyCare services and 988, the 24/7 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

## GUIDELINES FOR INTERVENTION

Contact Habib Health and Wellness Center (Medical), Counseling and Psychological Services, WashU Cares, Work Life Solutions, or the Washington University Police Department for consultation on the seriousness of the situation, as well as strategies for how to best support the person.

Act sooner rather than later, and remember—safety first! If you are concerned for your own safety or the safety of others, do not hesitate to call 911 or Washington University Police Department at (314) 935-5555.

## DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

- Ensure the safety of yourself and those present.
- Use a calm, non-confrontational approach to defuse and de-escalate the situation.
- Set limits by explaining how the behavior is inappropriate; if the behavior persists, notify the student that disciplinary action may be taken. Ask the student to leave. Call the Washington University Police Department if there is a safety risk at 314-935-5555.
- Immediately file an incident report with WashU Cares at [washucares.wustl.edu](http://washucares.wustl.edu) if you're concerned about someone's well-being.
- Ask them if they're thinking about suicide.
- Really listen to their answer, and let them know you care.
- Refer them to the appropriate resources.



## CONFIDENTIALITY AND FERPA

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) permits communication about a student of concern in connection with a health and safety emergency. Observations of a student's conduct or statements made by a student may be shared with college administrators, campus police, the counseling center, or other Washington University faculty and staff who need to know in order to promote student and campus safety.