

Supporting a Student in a Crisis

July 11, 2025

PURPOSE

This guide is intended to support faculty and staff in recognizing signs that a student may be in crisis and responding with compassion and care. It outlines common behaviours that may indicate distress and offers practical strategies to connect students with appropriate support.

BACKGROUND

Students may experience crisis or distress for many reasons—academic pressure, mental health concerns, financial instability, caregiving responsibilities, or trauma, among others. Everyone experiences and expresses distress differently. As instructors, recognizing these signs and responding empathetically can help reduce harm and connect students to the resources they need to succeed and feel supported.

RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO CRISIS

If a student says they can't focus:

- Acknowledge what they're experiencing without judgment.
- Validate that everyone faces challenges, and support is available.
- Gently ask whether this is a new issue or something ongoing. Ask: "How can I support you in getting back on track?"
- Refer to resources listed below.
- Notify your School's Student Success Advisor to ensure follow-up support.

If a student is crying, angry, or visibly distressed:

- Move the conversation to a private space (in-person or virtual breakout room).
- Speak calmly and softly.
- Ask open-ended questions such as: "What would help you feel safer or more supported right now?"
- Avoid jumping to solutions; instead, listen to understand.
- Ask if the student has ideas for resolving their concern.
- Provide resources or referrals (see below).
- If there is concern for the student's immediate safety, try to confirm their physical location and call 911.
- Contact your Student Success Advisor for support and documentation.

If a student is unresponsive or missing from class:

- Reach out using all available communication methods (email, phone, LMS).
- Use a supportive, non-judgmental tone. For example: “I’m reaching out because I haven’t heard from you in a while, and I’m concerned. I’d love to connect and see how I can support you. Please let me know the best way to reach you.”
- Confirm the student’s contact details if possible.
- Alert your School’s Student Success Advisor to flag the absence and initiate outreach.

ASSINIBOINE SUPPORT RESOURCES AND REFERRALS

Student Success Advisors

Available by email, phone, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams to support students in all schools:

- Agriculture and Environment: 204-725-8712
- Business: 204-725-8724
- Health and Human Services: 204-725-8730
- Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts: 204-725-8741
- Horticultural Production & Sustainable Food Systems: 204-725-8741
- Trades: 204-725-8715
- Adult Collegiate: 204-725-8735 ext. 7134
- Winnipeg Campus: 204-694-7111 ext. 624
- Parkland Campus: 204-622-2222 ext. 6590

Not sure who to contact? Please email: studentservices@assiniboine.net.

Accessibility & Disability Services

Student Accessibility Coordinator

Email: ads@assiniboine.net

Phone: 204-725-8700 ext. 6052

Behaviour Intervention Team (BIT)

Report any concern to: BITTeam@Assiniboine.net


Mental Health & Wellness Resources

See the AC Mental Health & Wellness Guide at:

<https://assiniboine.net/community/employment/mental-health-wellness>

REFERENCES

College Transition Collaborative. COVID-19 Response: Supporting Students in Times of Uncertainty.
Imad, M. (2020). 10 Strategies to Support Students and Help Them Learn During the Coronavirus Crisis. Inside Higher Ed.



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