STUDENTS IN CRISIS
For some students, more serious mental health concerns may be occurring. A student in a serious mental health crisis may exhibit the following signs:

- Suicidal statements, gestures, or attempts
- Threats of violence or homicidal thoughts (written or spoken) against others
- Aggressive actions against persons or property
- Severe anxiety resulting in debilitating panic reactions
- Extremely disruptive behavior (e.g., physical outbursts, hostility)
- Inability to communicate effectively (e.g., disoriented thought, nonsensical verbalizations)
- Loss of contact with reality (e.g., hallucinations, paranoia, delusional thinking)

WHAT TO DO IN A SERIOUS CRISIS
If you believe a student to be at risk of imminent harm to self or another person, please contact 911 if a response is needed to ensure physical safety. You may also consult with a CAPS on-call clinician 24/7 by calling 650-723-3785.

Please let whomever you call know that the situation is a crisis so that they can react accordingly. If the student is cooperative and there is not an immediate risk of harm, please consider walking them to CAPS at Vaden Health Center during regular hours (M-F, 8:30-5).

Remember, being supportive is the best thing you can do for this student. Point out that seeking help is a sign of strength and that you understand that asking for help may be the hardest part. Let the student know that there are many places on campus where they may seek assistance. If the student would be better served by an office other than CAPS, please refer them accordingly. See Campus Resources for additional referral sources.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Department of Public Safety
711 Serra St.
650-723-9633 (Office)
650-329-2413 (24 hours, non-emergency)
https://police.stanford.edu

Office of the Ombuds
Rosan Gomperts, Interim Ombuds
rosang@stanford.edu
https://ombuds.stanford.edu

Vaden Health Center
866 Campus Drive
650-498-2236
https://vaden.stanford.edu

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
866 Campus Drive, 2nd Floor
Walk-In Hours for Crisis: 8:30am-5pm
650-723-3785 (24 Hours a Day)
https://caps.stanford.edu

Confidential Support Team (CST)
419 Lagunita Drive
Walk-In Hours: 8:30 am–5 pm (Monday–Friday)
650-736-6933 (Business Line, 8:30 am- 5:00 pm)
650-725-9955 (24 Hours a Day)
https://vaden.stanford.edu/get-help-now/confidential-support-team

Helping Students in Distress
A Guide for Faculty and Staff

The college years can be stressful for students as they face the challenges of a demanding academic environment and the responsibilities of becoming an adult. Additionally, students may arrive at Stanford with existing concerns such as family difficulties or financial problems.

Faculty and staff are in the unique position of identifying distressed students and helping them to access the resources needed to cope with the demands of college life. You are on the front lines, witnessing the early signs of distress as they are played out on campus and in the classrooms. Students are also likely to initially seek assistance from faculty and staff members, particularly when they see you as available and willing to listen. Beyond the support you can provide, there are also professional support services available to students through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

CAPS staff is available to meet with students and to consult with you about providing the help that students may need.
IDENTIFYING A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

Many students have difficulty asking for help. Instead, they will indicate or show signs that they are struggling. The intensity of these signs of distress is one factor in determining the best response to take with each student.

At one time or another, everyone feels upset, depressed, and/or unhappy. Cause for concern should arise when the symptoms of distress occur for extended periods of time or begin to interfere with a student’s academic responsibilities or social/personal relationships. The following is a list of signs that might indicate that a student is in distress. (NOTE: This list is not a comprehensive list. Students may exhibit other behaviors that are just as serious but are not listed).

### Academic Signs
- Significant decline in quality of work
- Repeated absence(s) from class or lab
- Not handing in homework or assignments
- Submitted coursework that expresses signs of anger, hopelessness, isolation, depression, or despair
- Inappropriate disruptions or verbalizations in class
- Lack of participation in class

### Psychological or Physical Signs
- Deterioration in physical presence or hygiene
- Exaggerated behaviors or personality traits (e.g., agitation, withdrawal, blunted affect)
- Constant irritability, anxiety, or tearful behavior
- Overt suicidal thoughts or behavior, such as referring to suicide as an option or manner of coping
- Unwarranted anger, hostility, or outbursts
- Significant changes in concentration or motivation
- Evidence of alcohol or other drug dependence or abuse
- Visible increases or decreases in weight
- Extreme fatigue or sleepiness in class
- Evidence of cutting behavior (e.g., knife-like cuts on arms)

### Additional Factors to Consider
- Candid statements indicating family problems, personal losses such as the death of a family member or the break-up of a significant relationship
- Expressions of concern about a student by peers, lab partner(s), or classmates
- Written or verbal statements that have a sense of finality or hopelessness
- Your sense that something is seriously amiss (no matter how vague this might be)

HELPING A DISTRESSED STUDENT

The following recommendations can be used if a student approaches you with a problem and/or if you decide to approach a student. Performing these steps in an understanding and respectful manner will make the process of providing assistance or making a referral more likely to succeed.

**Privately talk to the student about your concerns.**
Provide the student with your undivided attention. A few minutes of your listening may be enough to assist the student in solving their own problem. Ask the student, if necessary, if they have ever discussed their concerns with a counselor. Encourage the student to talk with a professional at CAPS.

**Express your concerns in nonjudgmental terms.**
Be direct and specific. For example, “I have noticed that you have not been handing in your work lately and I am concerned,” rather than “Why have you not handed in your work?”

**Listen to their thoughts and feelings in a sensitive, nonthreatening manner.**
By repeating or paraphrasing the essence of what the student has conveyed to you, you communicate empathy and understanding. Do your best to include both the feeling and content of what was told to you. For example, “It sounds like you are having difficulty transitioning to your senior year and you feel anxious about the future.” But remember, it is important to let the student do most of the talking.

### MAKING A REFERRAL

If you believe the student is not a threat to harm to themselves or others, suggest to them in a caring manner that they may benefit from a meeting at CAPS.

It is best, however, not to make the referral when the student is extremely upset or confused. Wait for the student to calm down before offering this suggestion.

Some additional information to offer when making a CAPS referral:

- Sessions are confidential. This means that information about the student cannot be released to family, friends, faculty, or other offices without the student’s written permission. (There are limitations to this confidentiality which will be explained to the student in their first session).
- Counseling records are kept separately from academic records and are protected by law.
- Short term counseling services are free to students who have paid the Health Center Fee.
- CAPS is staffed by licensed clinical providers.

Provide CAPS phone number (650-723-3785) when making the referral. You can also call with the student present or walk the student over to Vaden Health Center. In a crisis, the student can be seen that day for a crisis appointment. Please contact us as soon as possible so proper arrangements can be made.