

Campus Crisis Response Quick Guide

Evidence-based protocols for responding to mental health emergencies

IN AN IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY, CALL 911

For crisis support: 988 Lifeline | Text HOME to 741741

1. RECOGNIZING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Immediate Danger Signs (Call 911):

- Active suicidal behavior or attempt in progress
- Possession of weapons with intent to harm self or others
- Severe intoxication with risk of harm
- Physical aggression or violence
- Complete break from reality with dangerous behavior

Warning Signs Requiring Urgent Response:

- Expressing suicidal thoughts or plans
- Giving away possessions or saying goodbye
- Sudden calm after period of depression
- Severe panic attack or anxiety episode
- Psychotic symptoms (hallucinations, delusions)
- Self-harm injuries
- Severe emotional distress (uncontrollable crying, rage)

2. IMMEDIATE RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Step	Action	Key Points
1. ASSESS	Evaluate immediate safety	Is there danger to self or others? Any weapons? Is the person responsive?
2. STAY	Remain calm and present	Use calm voice. Don't leave the person alone. Listen without judgment.
3. CONTACT	Call for appropriate help	911 for emergencies. Campus security. Counseling center crisis line.
4. SUPPORT	Provide emotional support	Validate feelings. Avoid minimizing. Don't promise confidentiality.

5. HANDOFF	Transfer care to professionals	Stay until help arrives. Provide context to responders. Follow up later.
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3. DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES

Communication Strategies:

- Speak slowly and calmly in a low, steady voice
- Use simple, clear language — avoid jargon
- Give the person space — maintain safe distance
- Avoid sudden movements or threatening postures
- Listen actively and reflect back what you hear
- Acknowledge their feelings without judgment
- Avoid arguing, criticizing, or challenging delusions
- Offer choices when possible to provide sense of control

Helpful Phrases:

- "I'm here to help you."
- "I can see you're going through something really difficult."
- "Your safety is what matters most right now."
- "Can you tell me what you need?"
- "Let's figure this out together."

4. POST-CRISIS PROTOCOL

Immediate Follow-up (Within 24 hours):

- Document the incident according to campus policy
- Notify appropriate campus officials (Dean of Students, Counseling Center)
- Check on the individual's status if appropriate
- Debrief with colleagues or supervisor
- Consider your own emotional needs — seek support if needed

Supporting Recovery:

- Connect the individual with ongoing support services
- Coordinate with academic advisors on any accommodations
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality
- Follow up periodically as appropriate to your role

5. QUICK REFERENCE: CRISIS CONTACTS

Resource	Contact	When to Use
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Emergency Services	911	Immediate danger to life
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	Call or Text 988	Suicidal crisis, emotional distress
Crisis Text Line	Text HOME to 741741	Need to text rather than call
Campus Security	[Your Campus Number]	Campus emergencies, safety concerns
Counseling Center	[Your Campus Number]	Non-emergency mental health support
SAMHSA Helpline	1-800-662-4357	Substance abuse crisis
Trevor Project (LGBTQ+)	1-866-488-7386	LGBTQ+ youth crisis

This guide is for educational purposes and does not replace professional training. Campus personnel should complete formal crisis intervention training. Always follow your institution's specific policies and procedures.