

CARE CARD

YOUR GUIDE TO NAVIGATING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS & EMERGENCIES AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY



CREATING A CULTURE OF CARE



At Indiana University, we want to create a culture of care where everyone feels comfortable talking about their mental health and wellness. But we know it's often difficult to start the conversation. Don't underestimate a person's struggles. It is far better to check in unnecessarily than to dismiss a potentially harmful situation. Find a way to speak privately to them. Don't promise confidentiality—university guidelines require you to report a person who is at immediate risk of harming themselves or others. Most of all, thanks for watching out for our students!



KNOW THE SIGNS

There are important signs to pay attention to because they may indicate a student is struggling and needs support.

- » **Missed assignments**
- » **Repeated absences**
- » **Decline in academic performance**
- » **Reduced participation or involvement**
- » **Excessive fatigue**
- » **A change in personal hygiene**
- » **Inappropriate or exaggerated behavior**
- » **Alarming or worrisome content in assignments**



SAY WHAT YOU SEE

Be direct. Let the student know that you've noticed a change. Stick to the facts. Don't judge. Don't make assumptions. Just say what you see.

Ways to talk to someone who you see is struggling:

"You seem distracted today. Is there anything you want to talk about?"

"You seem really tired in class lately. How are you doing?"

"I noticed you missed class a few times. What's going on for you?"



HEAR THEM OUT

Be a good listener and balance the conversation. Be curious and keep your questions open-ended. Don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions based on what they say. It's rarely necessary (or helpful) to share your own experience or give advice. Remember, this conversation is about them, not you.

Ways to hear them out:

"I'm sorry, that seems like a difficult situation to be in. What is that like for you?"

"I'd like to hear more about that."

"That sounds really difficult. How is it affecting your life?"



SHOW YOU CARE

Your role is to be a warm, supportive presence. Build trust by asking what the student needs. Your words are powerful. What you say and how you say it can signal not only that you care about them, but that you're also a safe person to reach out to.

Ways to show you care:

"Thanks for taking time to talk with me. I wanted to have this conversation because I care about how you are doing and want you to know I'm here to support you in the ways you need."

"How can I be helpful?"



KNOW YOUR ROLE

You aren't their therapist or doctor. You're there to listen. Setting clear boundaries will help maintain a healthy relationship while still being supportive. Don't judge, preach, or downplay. Just listen and help them get the help they need.

One way to support a student is to normalize and encourage help-seeking. You can praise them for reaching out for help.

Ways to set boundaries:

"Thank you for being so open with me. I want to continue this conversation, and I also want to make sure that you're getting the help you need. I really think you may find _____ to be a very helpful and comforting resource."

"Reaching out to _____ for the first time can be a little confusing. Would you like help connecting to _____?"

"I really think _____ can address some of your needs, but sometimes it takes several tries to find a place that is the best fit. For any reason if it doesn't feel like a match, then ask what other resources may be a better fit for your needs."



HELP THEM ACCESS RESOURCES—AND OTHER HELPFUL TIPS

- » Know your campus's mental health resources. Use the QR code below or visit iu.edu/carecard
- » Connect to students one-on-one through office hours and other modes of private conversation. This creates a safe space for students to share their struggles with you.
- » Students in distress may need help connecting with a resource. Showing them how to access a resource increases the likelihood that they actually do. Help-seeking requires knowledge and skill sets that may be new to the student. Your help in demonstrating the help-seeking process teaches them what it's like and can build their confidence to do it on their own in the future.
- » In addition to what's on Canvas, include a link or QR code for mentalhealth.iu.edu in your syllabi. Here is some sample language to accompany it: "If you are feeling stressed, worried, or down during the semester, or you notice signs of emotional distress in someone else, please feel free to stop by my office or consider reaching out for support via resources at mentalhealth.iu.edu."
- » Consider incorporating meditation, breathing, or other mindfulness practices into the classroom and adding self-care activities—such as exercise, spending time in nature, or talking to a friend—to assignments.
- » Begin your semester by talking about mental health. Tell the class that students can come to you when they are struggling, and reiterate that message during high-pressure times, such as exams or charged political or campus events.
- » Find care referral forms for your campus under the Emergency Resources tile on iu.edu/carecard.
- » Don't hesitate to call 911 for help if the student is in danger.

Care Card is an initiative of:



OFFICE OF THE
CHIEF HEALTH OFFICER

Please e-mail cho@iu.edu with your feedback, comments and questions.



Explore IU mental health resources

iu.edu/carecard

