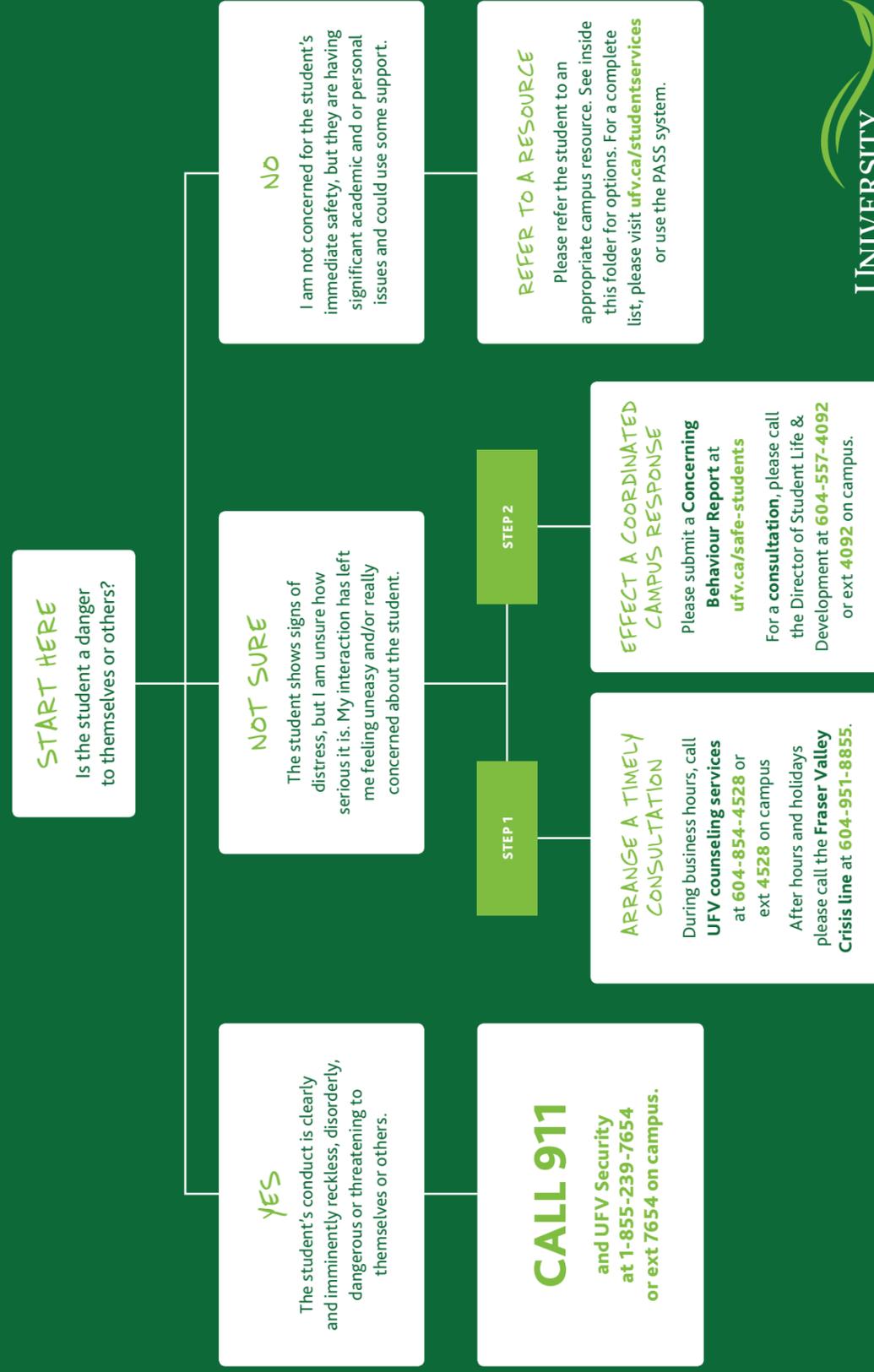


## Who to Contact

Follow this chart to determine who to contact when faced with a distressed or disruptive student.



[ufv.ca/safe-students](http://ufv.ca/safe-students)



# ASSISTING STUDENTS IN DISTRESS

[ufv.ca/safe-students](http://ufv.ca/safe-students)

A reference for faculty and staff

## Indicators of Distress: What to Look for

Be aware of the following indicators of distress. Look for groupings, frequency, duration and severity — not just isolated symptoms.



### ACADEMIC INDICATORS

- Sudden decline in quality of work and grades
- Repeated absences
- Disorganized performance
- Multiple requests for extensions
- Overly demanding of faculty and staff time and attention
- Unusual or out of character content in writings or presentations
- Personal rather than academic issues dominate office hours



### PHYSICAL INDICATORS

- Marked changes in physical appearance including deterioration in grooming, hygiene, or weight loss/gain
- Excessive fatigue/signs of sleep disturbance
- Intoxication, hangovers, or smelling of alcohol
- Disorientated or appearing "out of it"
- Garbled, tangential, disconnected, or slurred speech
- Behaviour is out of context or unusual
- Delusion and paranoia



### BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS

- Self-disclosures of personal distress such as family problems, financial difficulties, contemplating suicide, grief
- Unusual/disproportional emotional response to events
- Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions, paranoia
- Irritability or unusual apathy
- Verbal abuse (e.g. taunting, badgering, intimidation)
- Expressions of concern about the student by their peers



### SAFETY RISK INDICATORS

- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Physical violence (Shoving, grabbing, assault, use of weapon)
- Implying or making a direct threat to harm self or others
- Academic assignments dominated by themes of extreme hopelessness, rage, worthlessness, isolation, despair, acting out, suicidal ideations/violent behaviours, paranoia, thoughts of persecution — a "cry for help."
- Stalking or harassment
- Communicating threats via email, correspondence, texting or phone calls.

*With Thanks: UfV would like to thank the University of California, Berkeley for their permission to adapt their content for use in this document.*

## Compassion

UFV faculty/staff are in a unique position to demonstrate compassion for students in distress. Students may feel alone, isolated, and even hopeless when faced with academic and life challenges. These feelings can easily disrupt academic performance and may lead to dysfunctional coping and other serious consequences.

The University, in collaboration with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), requests that you act with compassion in your dealings with such students. You may be the first person to notice a student in distress since you have frequent and prolonged contact with them.

## Action

Students exhibiting troubling behaviours in your presence are likely having difficulties in various settings including the classroom, with roommates, with family, and even in social settings.

Trust your instincts and seek out campus resources if a student leaves you feeling worried, alarmed, or threatened.

## Change

Sometimes students cannot, or will not, turn to family or friends. Your expression of concern may be a critical factor in saving a student's academic career, or even their life.

The purpose of this folder is to help you recognize the symptoms of student distress and identify appropriate referrals to campus resources.

## Resources and Information

Use the information below to help you refer the student to UFV counselling services or campus security.

**Safety first:** the welfare of the campus community is the top priority when a student displays threatening or violent behaviour. Do not hesitate to call for help.

**Listen sensitively and carefully:** Use a non-confrontational approach and a calm voice. Avoid threatening, humiliating, and intimidating responses.

**Be proactive:** Engage students early on and set limits on disruptive behaviour.

**Be direct:** Don't be afraid to ask students directly if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, feeling confused, or having thoughts of harming themselves or others.

**Follow through:** Direct the student to the physical location of the appropriate campus resource listed at [ufv.ca/safe-students](http://ufv.ca/safe-students).

**Consultation and documentation:** Always document your interactions with distressed students. Consult with your department chair/supervisor and report the incident at [ufv.ca/safe-students](http://ufv.ca/safe-students) following the interaction.

## What About Privacy?

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (1992) (FOI/PPA) allows University faculty and staff to share observations about the behaviour of students, statements made by students, and concerns about students generally with UFV personnel who have responsibility for the welfare of students, and other appropriate individuals as suggested in this document.

FOI/PPA and other student privacy regulations generally allow the University to release such information to parents, police, or others whose knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of the students or others individuals. Appropriate consideration for student privacy should be given before information is shared with people other than those suggested in this document. Questions about when such disclosure is appropriate can be answered by the University Privacy Office or by University Legal Counsel.

**For help connecting students to personal, career, and crisis counselling Mon - Fri 9am - 4:30 pm.**

**UFV Counselling Services**

Abbotsford  
604-854-4528  
B214

Chilliwack  
604-795-2808  
A1318

**For after hours crisis intervention**

**Fraser Valley Crisis Line**

**LOCAL**  
604-951-8855

**TOLL-FREE**  
1-877-820-7444