STUDENTS in CRISIS

When an individual’s usual style of coping is no longer effective, emotional or physiological response escalates. As emotions intensify, the person may become disoriented, non-functional, or attempt harm. If a student is in a serious mental health crisis, you may see or hear:

- Suicidal statements or suicide attempts
- Violent or homicidal actions, attempts, or threats (written or verbal)
- Destruction of property or other criminal acts
- Extreme anxiety, panic reactions
- Difficulty communicating (garbled or slurred speech, disjointed thoughts)
- Loss of contact with reality (seeing or hearing things that aren’t there)

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU SUSPECT A SERIOUS CRISIS

If you believe a student may be in imminent danger of harming him/herself or others, CALL Penn Police 215-898-7333 or 511 (on campus)

If you need help assessing the situation, CALL CAPS 215-898-7021 or walk the student to CAPS

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES
University of Pennsylvania

215-898-7021
3624 Market Street, First Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19104

vpul.upenn.edu/caps

MONDAY, TUESDAY, FRIDAY
9AM - 5PM

WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY
9AM - 7PM

CAPS
Counseling & Psychological Services
University of Pennsylvania
The college years can be very stressful. Faculty and staff are often the first to witness signs of distress and are in a unique position to offer resources and support. CAPS staff can consult with you about the various ways to help a student in need.

### ACADEMIC SIGNS OF DISTRESS
- Deterioration in quality of work
- Missed assignments or appointments
- Repeated absences
- Continual seeking of unusual accommodations (late papers, postponed exams)
- Written assignments expressing hopelessness, isolation, rage, or despair
- Lack of engagement in classes or labs
- Inappropriate disruptions, monopolizing classroom time

### PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS OF DISTRESS
- Deterioration of physical presence or hygiene
- Visible increase or decrease in weight
- Excessive fatigue or difficulty sleeping
- Exaggerated personality traits or behaviors (agitation, withdrawal)
- Excessive use of alcohol or other drugs
- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Irritability, constant anxiety, tearfulness
- Marked changes in concentration and motivation
- Overtly suicidal thoughts, such as referring to suicide as a current option

### OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER
- Direct statements indicating problems such as death of a family, break-up, academic failure
- Written or verbal statement of hopelessness or finality
- Friends or classmates expressing concerns for a student

### WHAT YOU CAN DO
If a student approaches you with a problem, take the time to listen respectfully and without judgment.
- Talk to the student in private with no distractions
  - Give the student undivided attention; a few minutes of effective listening may help the student feel comfortable deciding what to do next
- Ask if the student has ever talked about her/his concerns with anyone else, including a counselor. If appropriate, encourage the student to talk to a professional
  - Listen sensitively, in a non-threatening way
    - Communicate understanding by repeating back what the student has shared
  - Be direct, specific, and non-judgmental
  - Refer to specific resources and mention that seeking help is a sign of strength

### MAKING A REFERRAL
Do not attempt to make a referral when the student is so upset and confused that he/she cannot listen or understand. Wait until the student is calm enough to respond to your suggestions.

Suggest in a caring, supportive manner that the student may benefit from meeting with a CAPS counselor. Give the student the Counseling Center phone number (215-898-7021) and encourage the student to call from your office. You may even offer to walk the student directly to CAPS.

Keep in mind, and mention if necessary:
- CAPS services are free to Penn students.
- Counseling at CAPS is confidential.
- Students need not inform parents or insurance about visiting CAPS