



# RECOGNIZING AND INTERVENING WITH STUDENTS IN DIFFICULTY OR CRISIS

# RECOGNIZING A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

As a teacher or staff member, you may be approached by students who confide in you, or you may be one of the first people to observe indicators of distress in a student. This document aims to help front-line workers recognize a crisis situation, take action and refer the student to the right resource, according to the type and severity of the situation.

ACADEMIC	PHYSICAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL	RISK FOR SAFETY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Repeated absences</li><li>• Sudden drop in quality of work and grades</li><li>• Disturbing content in writing or presentation</li><li>• Systematically seeks personal rather than academic advice</li><li>• Does not respond to repeated requests for contact or meetings</li><li>• Repeatedly requests extensions or special considerations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marked change in physical appearance (poor hygiene, sudden weight changes)</li><li>• Strange and bizarre behavior indicating loss of contact with reality</li><li>• Visibly intoxicated or smelling of alcohol or marijuana.</li><li>• Rapid speech or manic behavior</li><li>• Lethargy</li><li>• Observable signs of injury (cuts and burns without explanation)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disclosure of personal distress</li><li>• Unusual or disproportionate emotional reaction to events</li><li>• Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions</li><li>• Verbal abuse (teasing, harassment)</li><li>• Rejected from the rest of the group</li><li>• Peers expressing concern about the student</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Verbal or written references to suicide, homicide, aggression or self-injurious behavior</li><li>• Unprovoked anger and hostility</li><li>• Use of physical violence (grabbing, assaulting, using a weapon)</li><li>• Stalking or harassing others</li><li>• Communicating threats or disturbing comments in person or by email, text message or phone call.</li></ul>

# DEALING WITH A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

If a student confides in you, take the time to listen. You can also initiate a conversation with the student if you are concerned about him or her.

- Demonstrate **empathy** and **active listening** (eye contact, nodding to show interest and rephrasing what the student has just said to make sure you've understood).
- Don't hesitate to **ask direct questions** to validate the presence of suicidal thoughts in the student.
- Make sure you **respect your comfort level**. You are not a mental health professional. As a front-line responder, your job is not to intervene, but rather to refer.
- **Refer the student to the appropriate resource**. (See next page). If you have difficulty assessing the student's needs or risk level, refer to your program coordinator or **Patrick Girard**, the psychosocial counselor ([p.girard@tav.ca](mailto:p.girard@tav.ca)), so they can guide you. Be sure to maintain student confidentiality at this stage, unless the student's safety or that of others is at risk. You can also initiate a conversation with the student if you are concerned about him or her.

**If a student presents a risk to their safety or that of others, please contact 9-1-1.**

# RESOURCE PAGE

## TAV COLLEGE'S PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES:

**Patrick Girard**

Psychosocial Counsellor

p.girard@tav.ca or Mio

B-306.1



<https://www.tav.ca/psychosocial-counselling-services/>

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

**Suicide Prevention Centre of Montreal**

Helpline for people with suicidal thoughts

1-866-277-3553 or 9-8-8

**Tel-Aide**

Listening line

514-935-1102

**Drugs: help and referral**

514-527-2626

**SOS Violence conjugale**

Helpline for people living with domestic violence

1-800-363-9010



<https://www.tav.ca/external-resource-centre/>

**For immediate NON-URGENT help: Dial 8-1-1, option 2**

**For an EMERGENCY (life-threatening or life-saving):  
Dial 9-1-1 and notify the front desk**