

Supporting NMSU Students Experiencing Psychological Distress

A. Emergency – In an emergency situation or when your safety is at risk, you can contact the NMSU Police by dialing 911.

B. Consult – When deciding how to support a student, you may want to consult with some of these resources:

- * Immediate Supervisor
- * Faculty Advisor
- * Dean of Students
- * Department Chair or Director
- * Colleague
- * Counseling Service

C. Support

If you choose to speak directly with the student, be reminded that you will NOT be taking on the role of counselor. You need only listen, express concern, and offer resource referral information. Follow these recommendations:

- Meet privately with the student (choose a time and place where you will not be interrupted).
- Set a positive tone. Express your concern and caring.
- Point out specific signs you've observed. "I've noticed lately that you ..."
- Ask, "How are things going for you?" **Listen attentively** to the student's response and encourage him or her to talk. "Tell me more about that."
- Allow the student time to tell the story. **Allow silences in the conversation.** Don't give up if the student is slow to talk.
- **Ask open-ended questions** that deal directly with the issues without judging. "What problems has that situation caused you?"
- If there are signs of safety risk, **ask if the student is considering suicide.** A student who is considering suicide will likely be relieved that you asked. If the student is not contemplating suicide, asking the question will not "put ideas in their head."
- **Restate** what you have heard as well as your concern and caring. Ask the student what they think would help. "What do you need to do to get back on a healthy path?"

D. Refer

- **Suggest resources and referrals.** Share any information you have about the particular resource you are suggesting and the potential benefit to the student. "I know the folks in that office and they are really good at helping students work through these kinds of situations."

FOR EXAMPLE:

- Encourage NMSU students to contact the **Aggie Health and Wellness Center**.
 - Tell the student that you would like them to talk to a professional counselor.
 - AHWC has an **On-Call Counselor** available from 8-11:30 am and 1-4:30 pm.
 - The AHWC phone number is **575-646-1512**.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE:

- Encourage students to call the **New Mexico Crisis Line** for support after hours:
 - 1-855-NMCRISIS (855-662-7474).
- **Avoid making sweeping promises** of confidentiality, particularly if the student presents a safety risk. Students who are suicidal need swift professional intervention; assurances of absolute confidentiality may get in the way.
- Unless the student is suicidal or may be a danger to others, **the ultimate decision to access resources is the student's**. If the student says, "I'll think about it," when you offer referral information, it is okay. People in varying levels of distress sometimes deny their problems because it is difficult to admit they need help or they think things will get better on their own.
- Let the student know that you are interested in hearing how they are doing in a day or two. End the conversation in a way that will allow you, or the student, to come back to the subject at another time. **Keep the lines of communication open**.
- **Talk with someone** in your college — director, chair, dean, etc., about the conversation and document your actions.

Adapted from *Promoting Student Mental Health: A guide for UC faculty and staff*

(https://www.ucop.edu/student-mental-health-resources/_files/pdf/PSMH-guide.pdf)