

The image shows the Iowa State Capitol building, a grand neoclassical structure with a prominent golden dome. The building features a portico with tall white columns and a balcony above. Two black banners with the word 'IOWA' in yellow are hanging from the columns. In the foreground, a paved walkway leads up to the building, with many people walking. The sky is clear and blue. A yellow banner in the top right corner contains the word 'IOWA' in bold black letters.

IOWA

RESOURCE GUIDE

FOR RESPONDING TO DISTRESS



RESOURCE GUIDE

FOR RESPONDING TO DISTRESS

Faculty, staff, and students at the University of Iowa can face a range of challenges and support needs – from struggling with employment or classes, to coping with a loss, to injury or illness.

With the breadth of support available for members of the campus community, it is sometimes difficult to know how to best connect individuals with the resources available to them. In collaboration with University Counseling Service, the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, the Employee Assistance Program, Undergraduate Student Government, and Graduate and Professional Student Government, the Office of the Dean of Students created this resource guide.

This guide contains information about responding to common individual struggles, ideas for starting conversations, and a directory of resources available across campus.

*You are strongly encouraged to report any criminal activity or safety concerns to police by calling 911. To call the Campus Safety non-emergency line, dial **319-335-5022**. For crisis mental health support, call the UI Support and Crisis Line at **844-461-5420** or **988**.*

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS:

Student Care and Assistance

319-335-1162

→ [DOS.UIOWA.EDU/ASSISTANCE](https://dos.uiowa.edu/assistance)

University Counseling Service

319-335-7294

→ [COUNSELING.UIOWA.EDU](https://counseling.uiowa.edu)

UI Employee Assistance Program

319-335-2085

→ [HR.UIOWA.EDU/EMPLOYEE-WELL-BEING/UI-EMPLOYEE-ASSISTANCE-PROGRAM](https://hr.uiowa.edu/employee-well-being/ui-employee-assistance-program)

SIGNS AND SUPPORT

Individuals may come to you for a variety of reasons. So many resources are available, and you may be the first step in helping someone get help. Focus on connecting them with one of the resource offices listed, even if you aren't sure it's the right office. The staff in these offices are skilled in determining needs and making referrals.

BECOME FAMILIAR WITH SIGNS THAT MAY INDICATE AN INDIVIDUAL NEEDS SUPPORT

People experience a range of challenges that produce stress. In more severe instances, stress may lead to distress or crisis when it begins to disrupt daily functioning.

Someone in distress may present changes in behavior, mood, cognition, or physical appearance. They may or may not say they are having problems.

Individuals in distress may:

- Appear irritable, sad, or confused
- Be unduly anxious
- Act withdrawn or disengaged
- Lack motivation or concentration
- Seek constant attention
- Lack personal hygiene
- Demonstrate bizarre, erratic, or concerning behaviors including references to self-harm
- Share presence of persistent suicidal thoughts, depression, hopelessness, or difficulty dealing with grief

An individual in crisis may also demonstrate actions that may raise concern for well-being and safety. An individual in crisis warrants more immediate follow-up.

Crisis behaviors may include actions that are:

- Reckless
- Fixated
- Disorderly
- Aggressive
- Threatening
- Dangerous to themselves or others

SIGNS AN INDIVIDUAL MAY NEED EXTRA SUPPORT

Changes in physical appearance

- Look more tired than usual
- Seem "flat" or drained of energy
- Have had a pattern of illness or being run down
- Complaining of physical health issues such as headaches/migraines
- Eating more or less than usual
- Drinking or using other substances more than usual

Changes in mood

- More irritable, snappy
- Appear more anxious and worried
- React more emotionally than the situation warrants
- Quick to anger
- Appear to be overwhelmed by tasks they found previously manageable

Changes in behavior

- More withdrawn
- Doesn't seem to enjoy hobbies/interests as they once did
- Difficulty concentrating
- Not performing to usual standard

Changes in how thoughts are expressed

- Struggle to see any positive perspective ("It's always terrible")
- Thinking the worst
- Personalizes situation ("They are trying to make things worse for me")
- Saying things that are confusing or irrational

CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES

Students in your courses or colleagues and students working in your office may approach you for help. This is a good sign that they trust you. As faculty, staff, and employees, sometimes we are so worried about saying the wrong thing that we don't say anything.

Many of us feel responsibility to do something when those around us are in distress. A source of tension for faculty and staff when intervening with others in distress is the common belief that we should somehow come up with solutions, provide good advice that fixes or solves problems, or convince students to take quick action.

Despite this common belief we are more effective when we are active listeners when talking to those in distress.

Simply showing that you care and that you can connect them to the appropriate resources goes a long way. Active listening involves:

- **DE-ESCALATION:** Helping others reengage their intellects to their emotions, e.g. listening with a steady and slow-paced tone, keeping focus on a primary topic rather than getting lost and bogged down in a multitude of secondary and tertiary topics, or using questions to assist in thinking through options.
- **MINIMAL ENCOURAGERS:** Helping do the work of telling their stories by using small phrases such as *"Tell me more," "then what happened,"* or *"tell me more about what you mean?"*
- **SUMMARIZING:** Helping them hear themselves by repeating back in small or larger statements what they have said, e.g. *"You said you struggled?"* or *"Let me share with you what I have heard you say so far, you said..."*
- **NAMING AFFECT:** Validating statements by naming the emotions you sense even if they do not use the actual words themselves, e.g. *"When I listen to you, I think I'm hearing how frustrated you are."*
- **OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS:** Encouraging others to dive deeper into definition and detail, e.g. rather than asking a closed ended yes/no question such as *"Was this the first time this happened,"* asking instead *"Can you share with me all that was going on when this first happened?"*
- **CONNECTION TO RESOURCES:** *"I may not know the answer, but I want to support you and connect you with the right resources on campus."*

Summarizing what you heard and a simple discussion of what would be helpful to the individual can have a significant positive impact.

A Conversation Could Change a Life



The R U OK way contributes to suicide prevention efforts by encouraging people to invest more time in their personal relationships. R U OK helps us be alert to those around them, have a conversation if we identify signs of distress, and connect others to support long before they are in crisis.

Getting ready to ask... Are you OK?

1. Be Ready.
2. Be Prepared.
3. Pick your moment.

Start a conversation

1. Ask the individual if they are OK.
2. Listen.
3. Encourage Action.
4. Check In.

R U OK is a public health promotion charity that aims to start life-changing conversations to create a more connected world.

→ [RUOK.ORG.AU/WORK](https://ruok.org.au/work)



RESPONDING TO INDIVIDUALS IN DISTRESS

You don't need to know all the answers to be helpful. The most important thing is to listen and show you care. This doesn't make you someone's counselor and you are encouraged to connect to and refer to campus resources.

- Acknowledge the shared stressors facing everyone, especially during times of trauma and uncertainty.
"I know it's a stressful time, I feel it too..."
- Acknowledge that well-being and self-care are important, but hard to manage in competitive, achievement-oriented environments.
"Our environment can be competitive but we still care about you as an individual..."
- Be accessible. Let them know you will listen and that you can connect them to support resources.
"I am here to listen if you want to share challenges..."
- Promote the use of university support resources on your syllabus, employee handbooks, and through verbal reminders.
- Become familiar with how and when to refer individuals to university resources. You don't need to be or find the solution. Listen and refer.
- Follow up with the person after first contact to check in and offer further support.

It is important that you do not hesitate to interfere when you see behaviors that are reckless, disorderly, aggressive, defiant, destructive, threatening, and dangerous to self or others.



Reporting Concerns

- Always report serious or persistent inappropriate behavior to the Office of the Dean of Students, Campus Safety, or the Office of Civil Rights Compliance (OCRC) while safeguarding the individual's privacy.
- Keep Student Care and Assistance and the Threat Assessment Team informed of new concerns.

Various options for reporting are available on the Campus Safety website

→ [SAFETY.UIOWA.EDU/HOW-REPORT](https://safety.uiowa.edu/how-report)

ADDRESSING CONCERNS

When to consult with another resource:

- Anytime you're not sure how to handle or approach the concern(s)
- Individual keeps returning without following through on referrals
- Concerns are becoming more complex

When to refer students to another resource:

- You're providing more "counseling" than "advising"
- Problems or requests are outside of your scope or comfort level
- Issue would benefit from additional support
- Behavior shows no improvement or is worsening
- Concern involves university policies or reporting expectations



ASSISTING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT, DATING VIOLENCE, OR STALKING

ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WHO EXPERIENCE SEXUAL HARM

Sexual harm includes any conduct covered by the university's Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct, encompassing sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence or stalking.

Clarify

- **BE UP FRONT** about your ability to maintain confidentiality. Offering confidentiality you can't keep will undermine trust, so know your reporting responsibilities. *Most university employees are not confidential resources. Confidential resources are denoted with a * in the resource directory on pages 10 and 11*
- **COMMUNICATE** that sexual violence is never the responsibility of the survivor.

Listen

- **WITHOUT JUDGMENT.**
- **RESPECT THEIR CHOICES.** This includes what and how much they disclose, what services are needed, and whether to report to law enforcement or university officials.
- **DON'T ASSUME** that physical contact, even a gentle touch or hug, will be comforting.

Check

- **ASK** if they have safety concerns.
- **BE READY** to connect them with someone who can help with safety planning at the Rape Victim Advocacy Program, Domestic Violence Intervention Program, or Threat Assessment Team.
- **THE OFFICE OF CAMPUS SAFETY** can assist with safety concerns and provide reporting options.

Refer

- **INFORM** the student about confidential support and advocacy services:
 - Rape Victim Advocacy Program
 - Domestic Violence Intervention Program
 - University Counseling Service
 - Women's Resource and Action Center
 - Office of the Ombudsperson

Report

- **FOLLOW THROUGH** if you have reporting responsibilities. The policy may require that you notify the Title IX unit in the Office of Civil Rights Compliance within two business days.

The Complete University of Iowa Policy Manual can be found at

→ [OPSMANUAL.UIOWA.EDU](https://opsmanual.uiowa.edu)



LAWS AND CODES

PRIVACY LAWS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits communication about a student of concern under the following circumstances:

- UI may disclose personally identifiable information from an “educational record” to appropriate individuals in connection with a health or safety emergency. Information may be released to parents, police or others, if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.
- Information can be shared with university personnel when there is a specific need to know and should be limited to the essentials of university business.
- Observations of a student’s conduct or statements made by a student are not “educational records” and are therefore not protected by FERPA. Such information should be shared with appropriate consideration for student privacy.
- Offices that are considered confidential according to their licensure and professional standards are denoted with an *asterisk in the resource directory on pages 10 and 11. They will follow their professional standards in prioritizing privacy when working with individuals. However, they will share information when necessary in the case of an individual being at likely and imminent risk of harm to self or others.

CODE OF STUDENT LIFE

The Code of Student Life helps students learn and grow to become the best version of themselves.

The Code of Student Life establishes a framework to ensure our Hawkeye community achieves and upholds our goals and values. The university is committed to due process and fairness when applying these rules and engaging in the Student Accountability Process.

When a student becomes a Hawkeye, they agree to understand and abide by the rules listed in the code, recognizing that this document helps us maintain a safe, healthy, respectful, and supportive community, embodying the meaning of being a Hawkeye.

Examples of Prohibited Behavior

- Physical assault, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, or domestic violence
- Threats that cause a reasonable person to be fearful for one’s own safety or the safety of others
- Intoxication or impairment through the use of alcohol or other substances to the point where an individual is unable to care for themselves
- Obstruction or disruption of teaching, research, administration, disciplinary procedures or other University activities
- Use, display, or storage of a weapon or destructive device
- Harassment based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity/expression, and other forms of harassment
- Stalking, hazing, and disorderly behavior

Complete details can be found at

→ [DOS.UIOWA.EDU/CODE-OF-STUDENT-LIFE](https://dos.uiowa.edu/code-of-student-life)

RESPONDING TO INDIVIDUALS IN DISTRESS

IF AN INDIVIDUAL

TAKE ACTION

- Threatens to injure, harm, kill, or risk the safety of self or others
- Refuses to leave the classroom after being asked to leave
- Reports or initiates a threat or bomb scare

Immediately Call 911

- Exhibits unusual communication/behaviors, including threats to harm self or others
- Exhibits unusual fixation on stressful events or losses
- Exhibits inappropriate interest in weapons, mass attacks, or violence
- Suggests violence as a solution to a problem

Report the behavior of concern to the Threat Assessment Team

319-384-2955 • uitat@uiowa.edu

Submit an anonymous report at: safety.uiowa.edu/tat

- Appears to be out of touch with reality
- Reports suicidal thoughts or actions, depression, hopelessness, anxiety, and/or difficulty dealing with grief

Consult for guidance or advice with UI Support and Crisis Line

844-461-5420 • mentalhealth.uiowa.edu

University Counseling Service

319-335-7294 • counseling.uiowa.edu

- Personal or family emergency/concern
- Has difficulty securing basic needs (food, shelter, utilities, etc.)
- Exhibits behavior that interferes with or obstructs university processes/functions, including instruction and office operations
- Expresses an overall sense of struggling with difficulties of an unclear nature
- Is not attending class for an extended period of time
- Seems overwhelmed by a problem that could affect university attendance or persistence

Consult for guidance or advice with Student Care and Assistance

319-335-1162 • dos.uiowa.edu/assistance

University Counseling Service

319-335-7294 • counseling.uiowa.edu

Employee Assistance Program

319-335-2085

hr.uiowa.edu/employee-well-being-uiemployee-assistance-program

- Indicates experiencing hate crimes, bias, or discrimination

Consult for guidance or advice with University of Iowa Campus Safety

319-335-5022 • safety.uiowa.edu

Office of Civil Rights Compliance - Discrimination Investigations and ADA Compliance

319-335-0705 • diversity.uiowa.edu/daod/ocrc

- Is having academic or professional difficulty due to a physical, psychological, or learning disability
- Indicates a need for disability accommodations

Consult for guidance or advice with Student Disability Services

319-335-1462 • sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu

Faculty and Staff Disability Services

319-335-2660 • hr.uiowa.edu/support/faculty-and-staff-disability-services

- Reports having been a victim of stalking
- Reports sexual misconduct or relationship violence

Consult for guidance or advice with University of Iowa Campus Safety

319-335-5022 • safety.uiowa.edu

Office of Civil Rights Compliance - Title IX

319-335-0705 • diversity.uiowa.edu/daod/ocrc

RESOURCE DIRECTORY

NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

STUDENT CARE AND ASSISTANCE

319-335-1162

DOS-ASSISTANCE@UIOWA.EDU

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING SERVICE

319-335-7294

COUNSELING.UIOWA.EDU

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

319-335-2085

HR.UIOWA.EDU/EMPLOYEE-WELL-BEING/
UI-EMPLOYEE-ASSISTANCE-PROGRAM

→ [WELLBEING.UIOWA.EDU](https://wellbeing.uiowa.edu)

IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION, CALL **911** or
CAMPUS SAFETY DISPATCH at **(319) 335-5022** +~

FOR CRISIS MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT,
CALL THE UI SUPPORT AND CRISIS LINE at
844-461-5420 or DIAL **988** **~



* Confidential resources + 24 hour resources
~ Resources that serve employees

MENTAL HEALTH

UI Support and Crisis Line **~

Call/Text: 1-844-461-5420 • mentalhealth.uiowa.edu

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline **~

Call 988 • 988lifeline.org

Johnson County Mobile Crisis Outreach

(855) 581-8111

builtbycommunity.org/i-need-help/mobile-crisis

University Counseling Service *

(319) 335-7294 • counseling.uiowa.edu

GuideLink Center **~

(319) 688-8000 • guidelinkcenter.org

Employee Assistance Program **~

(319) 335-2085

hr.uiowa.edu/employee-well-being/ui-employee-assistance-program

SEXUAL HARM, DATING VIOLENCE, AND STALKING

University of Iowa Campus Safety +~

(319) 335-5022 • safety.uiowa.edu

Office of Civil Rights Compliance - Title IX ~

(319) 335-0705 • diversity.uiowa.edu/daod/ocrc

Women's Resource and Action Center *

(319) 335-1486 • wrac.uiowa.edu

DVIP/RVAP (Domestic Violence Intervention Program/Rape Victim Advocacy Program) *+~

(800) 228-1625 • dviuiowa.org

ACADEMIC ISSUES

Collegiate Offices and College Deans

[registrar.uiowa.edu/collegiate-office-
contact-information-students](http://registrar.uiowa.edu/collegiate-office-contact-information-students)

Graduate College, Academic Affairs Office

(319) 335-2144 • grad.uiowa.edu

Academic Support and Retention

(319) 335-1497 • asr.uiowa.edu

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Student Legal Services *

(319) 335-3276 • legal.studentlife.uiowa.edu

ILLNESS OR INJURY

IN AN EMERGENCY, DIAL 911

Student Health *

(319) 335-8394 • studenthealth.uiowa.edu

UI QuickCare ~

(319) 384-8822 • uihc.org/ui-quickcare

Emergency Department, University of Iowa Health Care +~

(319) 356-2233 • uihc.org/emergency-medicine

RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Threat Assessment Team

(319) 384-2955 • safety.uiowa.edu/tat

Iowa Veteran Education, Transition, and Support (IVETS)

(319) 384-2626 • veterans.uiowa.edu/ivets

International Student and Scholar Services

(319) 353-2700 • international.uiowa.edu/iss

Residence Education

(319) 335-3700 • housing.uiowa.edu

Student Wellness

(319) 335-8394 • studentwellness.uiowa.edu

Student Disability Services

(319) 335-1462 • sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu

Office of Civil Rights Compliance ~

(319) 335-0705 • diversity.uiowa.edu/daod/ocrc

Office of the Ombudsperson **~

(319) 335-3608 • uiowa.edu/ombuds

Multicultural and International Student Support and Engagement (MISSE)

multicultural.uiowa.edu

IOWA

Office of the Dean of Students

 319-335-1162 |  dos.uiowa.edu
 dos@uiowa.edu |  [@hawkeyedean](https://www.instagram.com/hawkeyedean)

The University of Iowa Resource Guide for Responding to Distress is a collaborative effort from the Dean of Students, the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, University Human Resources, and Campus Safety.

The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination in employment, educational programs, and activities on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth and related conditions), disability, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, service in the U.S. military, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preferences. The university also affirms its commitment to providing equal opportunities and equal access to university facilities. For additional information on nondiscrimination policies, contact the Senior Director, Office of Civil Rights Compliance, the University of Iowa, 202 Jessup Hall, Iowa City, IA 52242-1316, 319-335-0705, daod-ocrc@uiowa.edu.