

Helping Students in Distress

Dean of Students Office



Recognizing and Responding to Students in Distress

If you are concerned about a student, do not let uncertainty stop you from taking action. UMass Boston is committed to supporting students in distress. This folder has been developed to help you recognize, respond to, refer, and report troubling student behavior.

WHERE DO I START?

Stay Safe

When a student displays threatening or potentially violent behavior, the safety of you, the student, and the campus community are the top priorities. Coordinated professional care and follow-up are effective in preventing suicide and violence.

Play It Safe

If you are concerned about a student, consult your department chair, supervisor, or the Dean of Students Office. Promptly report safety concerns and Student Code of Conduct violations.

De-escalate and Provide Hope

Distressed students can be sensitive. Avoid threatening, potentially embarrassing, or intimidating statements. Help students connect with the resources they need.

Clarify Expectations

Set early limits on disruptive or self-destructive behavior. Remind students verbally or in writing of standards/expectations for conduct, and of possible consequences for disorderly behavior. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct and the Classroom Conduct Policy.

Listen Sensitively and Carefully

Vulnerable students need to be heard and helped. They may find it difficult to articulate their distress. Ask directly if they feel their functioning is impaired or if they have thoughts of harming or killing themselves or others.

Share What You Know

State and federal laws and university policies mandate reporting in many crisis situations. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) allows faculty and staff to report student health and safety concerns to relevant campus offices trained to handle situations with sensitivity and care. Taking appropriate action does not violate a student's privacy.

Consult to Coordinate a Timely Response

Consult with appropriate university personnel to coordinate care for the student. Always report serious or persistent behavior to the Dean of Students Office as soon as possible. Misconduct may be formally addressed through the Student Conduct process, and additional campus resources may be necessary to help reduce or eliminate disruptive behaviors.

Follow Up

Once you have referred a student in distress, it is helpful (but not obligatory) for you to follow up in their ongoing care. Your firsthand knowledge and personal connections to this student are invaluable in understanding and appropriately responding to the student's situation.

Take Care

Helping a troubled student can take a toll on your personal well-being. Make sure you acknowledge what you've been through and receive adequate support.

How to Help

Talking with someone in distress can be challenging. These tips can make it easier to reach out:



Start

Find a quiet, comfortable place to talk.
Don't promise to keep your discussions secret.



Connect

Pay attention and avoid distractions.



Ask

Use phrases that show you want to help.
"I wanted to check in, because you haven't seemed yourself lately."



Listen

Take in what the person is saying without judgment or interruptions. Let them know you believe them. Paraphrase their words to make sure you fully understand.



Ask questions

"When did you begin feeling like this?" "How can I best support you?" Avoid saying: "I know how you feel."



Offer hope

Let the person know you care and that help is available. Before ending the conversation, agree together on a next step, like a follow-up conversation or professional help.



Know your limits

A situation may be more than you can handle. Get help from a crisis line or a mental health or medical professional. If the person is reluctant to call, offer to sit with them while they do, or call for them.



Act in an emergency

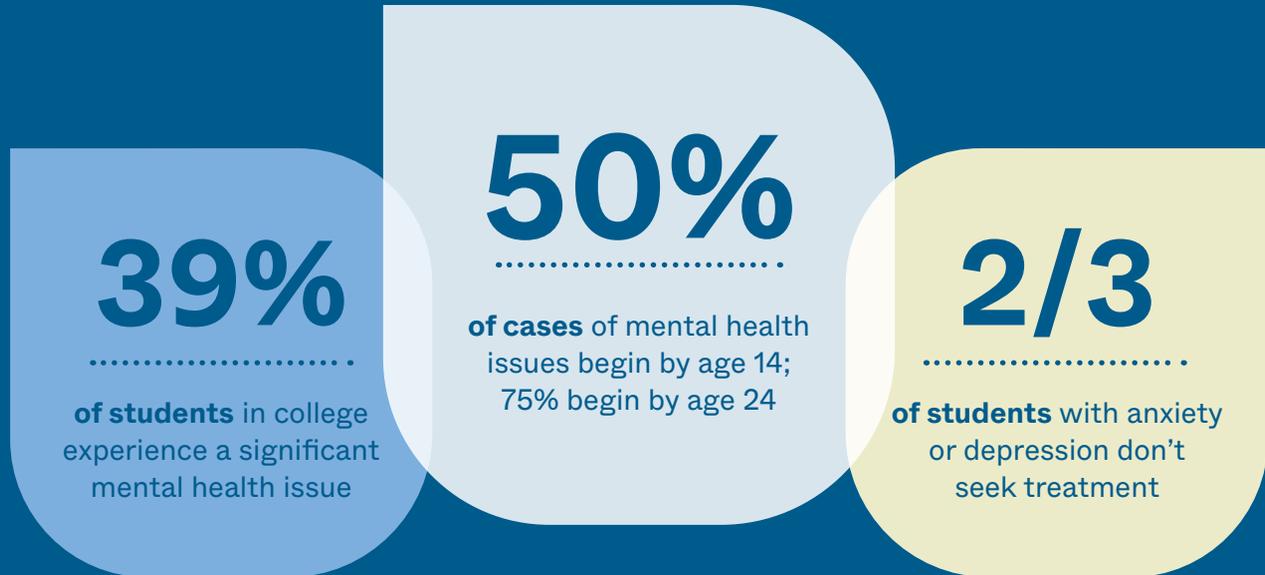
If someone is in danger, call the UMass Boston Police Department on campus at **617.287.1212**, or **911** off campus. If it is safe to do so, stay with the person in distress until help arrives.

Maintaining Compliance with State and Federal Laws and University Policies

UMass Boston has adopted numerous policies that protect and support our students, as well as our faculty and staff. Such policies include the following:

- Academic Honesty Policy
- Clery Act
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Hazing
- Tobacco-Free Campus Policy
- Nondiscrimination Policy
- Student Code of Conduct
- Title IX
- University Alcohol, Marijuana, and Drug Policies

More information on these policies as well as others can be found at umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies.



www.activeminds.org/about-mental-health/statistics

Report online at www.umb.edu/deanofstudents.

Building Networks of Support

College support networks help students cope with stress, overcome challenges, and connect to helpful resources. Encourage students to develop support networks that include **advisors**, **support groups**, and **counselors**. The following types of help are available:

IMMEDIATE SUPPORT

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**UMass Boston
Police Department**
617.287.1212
public.safety@umb.edu

**Office of Civil Rights
and Title IX**
617.287.7391
civilrights.titleix@umb.edu

Counseling Center
617.287.5690
Counseling.Center@umb.edu

Justice Bridge Legal Center
617.287.3190
u-access@umb.edu

University Health Services
617.287.5660
uhs@umb.edu

Dean of Students Office
617.287.5800
dean.students@umb.edu

U-ACCESS
617.287.3190
u-access@umb.edu

**Ross Center for
Disability Services**
617.287.7430
ross.center@umb.edu

COUNSELING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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**UHS Support and
Therapy Groups**
617.287.5690
Counseling.Center@umb.edu

UMB-UR-BEST
UMB-UR-BEST@umb.edu

Interfaith Campus Ministry
617.287.5838
interfaith.campusmin@umb.edu

ADDITIONAL ON-CAMPUS SUPPORT

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**Center for Student
Multicultural Affairs**
617.287.7844
mc.affairs@umb.edu

**Office of Diversity, Equity,
and Inclusion**
617.287.4827
diversity@umb.edu

Women's Center
617.287.7986
womens.center@umb.edu

Queer Student Center
617.287.7844
QSC@umb.edu

Veterans Affairs
617.287.5866
veterans@umb.edu

**Office of New Student and
Family Programs**
617.287.5813
orientation@umb.edu

**International Student and
Scholar Office**
617.287.6481
isss@umb.edu

Office of Off-Campus Living
617.287.6373
offcampus@umb.edu

NATIONAL RESOURCES

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Crisis Text Line
text HOME to 741741

**GLBT Peer Counseling
National Hotline**
1.888.843.4564
help@GLBHotline.org

National Drug Helpline
1.888.633.3239

**National Eating
Disorders Association**
1.800.931.2237

**National Council on
Problem Gambling Helpline**
1.800.522.4700

**National Suicide
Prevention Lifeline**
1.800.273.TALK (8255)

**RAINN (Rape, Abuse,
& Incest National Network)**
1.800.656.4673

SAMHSA National Helpline
1.800.662.HELP (4357)
SAMHSAInfo@samhsa.hhs.gov

Trans Lifeline
1.877.565.8860
contact@translifeline.org

**TrevorLifeline
(LGBTQIA + crisis intervention)**
1.866.488.7386

Dean of Students Office

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