

**STUDENT DISTRESS**  
a faculty and staff  
resource guide

## Hopkins Cares

**RECOGNIZE**  
**RESPOND**  
**REFER**

It is not uncommon for students to struggle with academic, social, and financial stress; physical or mental health concerns; adverse experiences; and other challenges to their well-being and academic standing. Early identification and prompt referral of students in distress are crucial.

If you work with graduate and/or professional students on the Johns Hopkins campuses, this folder is intended to help you do these important things:

- **understand** your role as a partner in students' success
- **recognize** students who may need help
- **respond** supportively and safely
- **refer** students to relevant campus resources
- **report** as required and seek further guidance as needed



## What is my role in helping students in distress?

Faculty and staff are often in a unique position to observe and intervene when a student is experiencing problems, and **students are much more likely to use campus resources if a faculty or staff member helps connect them to the services.** You are not responsible for assessing or treating mental or behavioral health issues. Nevertheless, your ability to recognize signs of serious distress, acknowledge your concerns directly and nonjudgmentally, and make an informed referral can play a significant role in helping students resolve their difficulties.

In your classroom, office, or online forums, strive to foster an atmosphere of respect and compassion. Put tools into students' hands by including a list of essential campus resources in your syllabus. **On the first day of class, let students know that**

**they can speak to you if they need assistance.** Set and maintain clear academic and behavioral expectations. Address concerns promptly.

**SUGGESTED SYLLABUS LANGUAGE:** "If you are struggling with anxiety, stress, depression, or other wellbeing-related concerns, please consider contacting the Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program (JHSAP). If you are concerned about a friend, please encourage that person to seek out counseling. JHSAP can be reached at 443-287-7000 or [jhsap.org](http://jhsap.org) and JHSAP has counselors available at multiple Johns Hopkins campuses: East Baltimore, Eastern, Bayview, Washington, D.C., and Columbia."

## How should I approach a student I'm concerned about?

### 1) START THE CONVERSATION

- **Trust your instincts.** It is okay to express concern!
- **Be respectful and kind.** Ask the student's permission to discuss your concern.
- **Arrange a time to speak privately,** unless you are concerned for your own safety. If safety is a concern, arrange to have someone else present and let the student know this in advance.
- **Describe what you have observed.**
- **Ask open-ended questions.**
- **Do not be afraid to ask whether the student is considering suicide**—asking will not put the idea in the person's mind.

### 2) LISTEN

- **Do not promise confidentiality,** as some situations may obligate you to report; be open about this.
- Allow the student to speak freely about what is going on. If the student is slow to talk, **be patient.**
- **Listen without judgment,** and restate what you have heard.
- **Validate feelings.** Avoid minimizing or dismissing the problem.

### 3) SUPPORT AND REFER

- **Encourage the student to seek help,** and give specific resources (see the back of this folder).
- **Offer** to call JHSAP together: 443-287-7000.
- **Decide together** what the student's next steps will be. **Summarize** the plan.
- **Notify your Student Affairs point of contact** regarding your concerns for the student.
- If your offer of help is rejected, respect the student's boundaries. **Make it clear that your door is still open.** If you remain concerned for the person's safety, notify JHSAP or your school's Student Affairs point of contact immediately.
- **Follow up** later with the student to see how things are going.

For more information on how to approach a student you are worried about, or to view JHSAP's workshop on Identifying and Referring Distressed Students, see [http://jhsap.org/help\\_student/for\\_faculty/index.html](http://jhsap.org/help_student/for_faculty/index.html) for suggestions. If in doubt as to how to address a situation, call JHSAP at 443-287-7000 for guidance.

## How can I gauge how serious or urgent the problem is? When and where should I refer? When must I report?

Kinds of distress and the responses appropriate to each are detailed below.

JHSAP provides further discussion on its website at [jhsap.org/help\\_student\\_for\\_faculty/index.html](https://jhsap.org/help_student_for_faculty/index.html). Campus resources are described in the Referral Guide on the back of this folder.

**EMERGENCY** Dial 911 or call Campus Safety and Security on your campus (see Referral Guide on back for specific contact information) if a student is seriously injured, incoherent, delusional, violent, threatening others verbally or physically, or voicing overt suicidal intent, plans, or threats. **Do not leave a suicidal person alone.** Stay with the person until help arrives. Once the immediate crisis has been addressed, follow up with a phone call to JHSAP at 443-287-7000. JHSAP works directly with the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program to provide support to faculty and staff impacted by a crisis; it is important to make sure you are able to receive support regarding stressful student situations.

**ILLNESS OR INJURY** Students experiencing non-emergency illness or injury should be encouraged to visit their primary care doctor or nearest urgent care clinic.

**MODERATE DISTRESS** If you observe behaviors that strongly suggest that something is wrong, refer the student to JHSAP and consult with your Student Affairs point of contact for further support and guidance. Such behaviors include marked changes in mood, hygiene, attendance, or academic performance; violent or disturbing content in schoolwork or communication; repeated requests for special consideration; behaviors that push the limits and may disrupt others; statement of suicidal thoughts without plan or intent; or uncharacteristic or exaggerated emotional responses that seem inappropriate to the situation. Any concern for the student's immediate safety should be treated as an emergency (see above).

**MILD DISTRESS** In case of concern for a student whose behavior does not suggest the potential for harm to self or others, you may be able to help prevent a situation from escalating simply by expressing your concern, encouraging the student to seek help from a relevant resource, and following up later with the student.

**SEXUAL ASSAULT** If a student shares information with you regarding an instance of sexual misconduct, as a designated Responsible Employee you are legally obligated to report it immediately to a university official in the Office of Institutional Equity. (For more information, see [sexualassault.jhu.edu/policies-laws](https://sexualassault.jhu.edu/policies-laws).) If you suspect sexual assault or relationship violence, offer the student options for seeking help, while being clear about your obligation to report any information disclosed to you. See the Referral Guide on the back of this folder for information on reporting and on seeking help anonymously.

**CONDUCT** Report behaviors that may violate the Student Conduct Code, including academic dishonesty and disruptive behavior to your Department Chair and Student Affairs point of contact. At times, the point of contact in Student Affairs may consult with JHSAP regarding student behaviors; although JHSAP may provide support to a student engaging in disruptive behavior, this does not preclude the school from pursuing disciplinary action if there is a violation of the Student Conduct Code.

**ABSENCE** The decision to excuse an absence or grant an extension rests with the instructor; your policy should be clearly expressed in your syllabus. JHSAP and your school's Student Affairs point of contact will not provide illness notes to students. Please refer to your school's Student Affairs Office for specifics regarding your program's policies on absences. JHSAP can provide documentation of attendance of appointments with the student's written permission.

## Resources by School:

### Advanced Academic Programs

- Security (DC): 202-663-5808
- Security (Homewood): 410-516-7777
- Security (Montgomery County): 301-294-7000
- Office of Student Services: 202-725-6782 or [advanced.jhu.edu/student-services](https://advanced.jhu.edu/student-services)
- Disability Support Services: 202-663-5956 or [aapdisability@jhu.edu](mailto:aapdisability@jhu.edu)

### Carey Business School

- Security (Baltimore): 410-234-9301 or 410-234-9300
- Security (DC): 202-588-0597 or 202-588-0590
- Office of Student Services: 410-234-9240 or [carey.jhu.edu/student-services](https://carey.jhu.edu/student-services)
- Disability Support Services: 410-234-9243 or [carey.jhu.edu/dss](https://carey.jhu.edu/dss)

### Engineering for Professionals

- Security (Homewood): 410-516-7777
- Office of Student Affairs: 410-516-2300 or [ep.jhu.edu/student-services](https://ep.jhu.edu/student-services)
- Disability Support Services: 410-516-2306 or [ep.jhu.edu/disability-services](https://ep.jhu.edu/disability-services)

### School of Advanced International Studies (DC)

- Security: 202-663-5808
- Office of Student Affairs: 202-663-5705 or [studentaffairs.jhu.edu/dc](https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/dc)
- Disability Support Services: 202-663-5705 or [studentaffairs.jhu.edu/dc-dss](https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/dc-dss)
- Illness/Injury: visit “Wellbeing and Support” at [studentaffairs.jhu.edu/dc](https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/dc)

### School of Advanced International Studies (Bologna)

- Security: +39-051-291-7800
- Office of Student Affairs: +39-051-291-7832 or [studentaffairs.jhu.edu/bologna](https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/bologna)
- Disability Support Services: +39-051-291-7832 or [studentaffairs.jhu.edu/bologna-dss](https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/bologna-dss)
- Illness/Injury: visit “Wellbeing and Support” at [studentaffairs.jhu.edu/bologna](https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/bologna)

### School of Advanced International Studies (Nanjing)

- Security: +86-25-8359-2436
- Office of Student Affairs: +86-025-8359-2453 or [studentaffairs.jhu.edu/nanjing](https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/nanjing)
- Disability Support Services: +86-025-8359-2453 or [studentaffairs.jhu.edu/nanjing-dss](https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/nanjing-dss)
- Illness/Injury: visit “Wellbeing and Support” at [studentaffairs.jhu.edu/nanjing](https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/nanjing)

### School of Education

- Security (Columbia): 410-516-9700
- Security (Baltimore): 410-516-7777
- Office of Student Affairs: 410-516-5430 or [education.jhu.edu/student-affairs](https://education.jhu.edu/student-affairs)
- Disability Support Services: 410-516-9734 or [education.jhu.edu/disability-services](https://education.jhu.edu/disability-services)

## PROTECTED STATUS BASED DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) [oie.jhu.edu](https://oie.jhu.edu) 410-516-8075

Johns Hopkins prohibits harassment and/or discrimination under the General Anti-Harassment Policy ([oie.jhu.edu/discrimination-and-harassment/general-anti-harassment-policy.html](https://oie.jhu.edu/discrimination-and-harassment/general-anti-harassment-policy.html)). In addition, Johns Hopkins prohibits sexual misconduct (which includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking and related retaliation) under the Sexual Misconduct Policy ([sexualassault.jhu.edu/policies-laws/](https://sexualassault.jhu.edu/policies-laws/)). OIE advises students, faculty, staff, and other community members regarding options for pursuing a complaint and/or interim measures, and OIE investigates and adjudicates these incidents, as appropriate, when the matter involves students, faculty and/or staff.

### To report:

Discrimination or Harassment: [oie.jhu.edu/discrimination-and-harassment/complaint-form](https://oie.jhu.edu/discrimination-and-harassment/complaint-form)

Sexual Misconduct: [sexualassault.jhu.edu/file-complaint/complaint-form.html](https://sexualassault.jhu.edu/file-complaint/complaint-form.html)

### To seek help anonymously for oneself or another regarding sexual assault:

Sexual Assault Helpline: 410-516-7333

Confidential resource for all JHU students; staffed by professionals who can provide immediate emotional support and information about medical, legal and university disciplinary options.

Sexual Assault Resource Unit (SARU): 410-516-7887

Student-run peer support line for those affected by sexual assault or concerned about a friend or loved one

## JHSAP provides

- free and confidential short-term counseling for students and their families
  - crisis response
  - wellbeing workshops
  - phone consultation to faculty and staff regarding concerns for student’s wellbeing
- 24/7 support is available by phone at 443-287-7000 (Toll Free: 866-764-2317); after hours and weekends option #2 on the voicemail will connect you to the on-call clinician.