



Responding to Mental Health Emergencies

Emergency situations are rare: however, swift and decisive action is necessary when they do occur. Generally, a *psychological emergency* involves one or more of the following:

- A suicide attempt, gesture, threat, or stated intention
- A homicidal attempt, gesture, threat, or stated intention
- Behavior posing a threat to self
- Behavior posing a threat to others
- Inability to care for self and this *may* include loss of contact with reality

In the event of an emergency, it is helpful to follow these basic guidelines:

- Plan for appropriate intervention or aid and get help. Be prepared with the number for crisis support: **SLO Hotline-(800) 783-0607 OR the Mental Health Evaluation Team: (805) 781-4700. *If the threat is emergent activate the police-*. See next section.**
- Stay calm, as this will help you respond more effectively, and help to reduce the student's anxiety or agitation.
- Provide a quiet, private place for the student to rest while further steps are taken
- Be compassionate, yet direct-talk to the student in a clear, straight-forward manner
- If the student appears to be dangerous to self or others, do not leave the student unattended; be aware of your environment and always maintain personal safety. Set clear physical boundaries ("Please step back you are too close.")
- If you are not "in-person" (phone, zoom, or other virtual platform) ask for an exact location of where the person is and a call back number in case you are disconnected.

The primary campus resources for responding to mental health emergencies are the Health Center and the Campus Police. The following options are available to you:

- For emergencies, Call for HELP - Campus Police (SLO) x3911 OR (805) 546-3205, (NCC) x4911 OR (805) 591-6205(NCC), or 911 if you are off campus.
- Phone consultation with a Health Center staff member are available by emailing: studenthealthcenter@cuesta.edu during weekday operations. *Never email in an emergency*, call the police and ask for a behavioral health response team.
- You can walk the student over to the Health Center (room 3150 in SLO or N1013 in NCC) for crisis consultation during operating hours. Please see Health Center Website



for current hours. ****The Health Center is closed and operating via Telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- Crisis is defined as an *immediate safety concern* (see next page).
- If the student is unusually aggressive or otherwise unmanageable, the Campus Police are available to help by dialing ext. 3911 (SLO) and ext. 4911 (NCC).
- Be prepared to provide as much information as possible about the student and the situation to the campus resource you contact.

What Constitutes a Crisis/Walk-in Appointment at the Health Center?

- Having current/recent thoughts of suicide
- Thoughts or verbal threats of harming someone else
- Concern for the safety of another person (friend, roommate, family member, classmate)
- A recent experience or concern of unwanted sexual contact
- A recent experience of domestic violence (i.e. someone verbally, physically, emotionally hurting or attempting to hurt them)
- A recent experience of stalking (i.e. someone engaging in a pattern of behavior that is creating fear for them, such as repeatedly following, calling, emailing or texting them)
- Seeing or hearing things that others do not seem to see or hear that is causing them distress
- Substance use that feels out of control (i.e. alcohol, legal or illegal substances, etc.)

Quick Guide: The Student with Suicidal Thoughts

1) Assess for Suicide:

- Ask directly if the student has thoughts of suicide
- Ask if they have a plan to do it
- Ask if they have a method/means to do it

2) Respond & Give Resources:

If the student answers **YES TO MORE THAN ONE** of the **Step One Suicide Assessment** questions above, this means they are thinking about ending their life and they have a plan and/or means to do it. **DO THIS NEXT:**

- **Walk the student to the Health Center** during operating hours (*do not leave the student alone*). If you can call the Health Center in advance, please do.
 - SLO (Rm 3150) 546-3171
 - NCC (Rm 1013) 591-6200 ext. 4207



- **OR, if the health center is closed:**
 - **Call: SLO Hotline-(800) 783-0607 with the person having suicidal thoughts if they have a plan or means to do it.**
 - **Call SLO Campus Police-ext. 3911 (If the health center is closed)**
 - **Call NC Campus Police-ext. 4911**
 - ***If the student is off campus, call local police – 911*** and request a safety check. Provide as much information as possible. It will be helpful if you know where the student is at the time and exactly what they reported to you which is the cause of concern.

Remember, FERPA's health or safety emergency provision permits such disclosures when the disclosure is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.

If the student answers **YES TO NONE OR ONLY THE FIRST** suicide assessment question(s), they *may be at risk but appear to not have an imminent threat to their safety*, **DO THIS:**

- Tell them you are concerned about their well-being and offer to connect them to mental health support at our [Cuesta Student Health Center](#). *If you can, follow-up with the student later.*
- By completing a [Well Being Concern](#) online, the Resolution Support Coordinator will personally reach out and offer any assistance the student may need (food, housing, mental health support, etc.). This process helps connect the student with a person who will offer all available supports and follow-up with the student.
- SLO Cuesta Health Center*-ext. 3171, Building 3100, Room 3150
- NC Health Center*-ext. 4207, Building N1000, Room N1013
- Provide the following 24/7 Crisis Support (also on the back of their student ID card):
 - **SLO Hotline (800) 783-0607**
 - **OR Text Courage: 741741**