



HELPING DISTRESSED STUDENTS

A guide for Charles Sturt
University (CSU) staff

Developed by the
Division of Student Services

INTRODUCTION

Many people experience emotional and psychological difficulties at some point in their lives. Usually these can be resolved by talking them through with family and friends. Sometimes professional help is needed. If you feel you need to or are requested to give a student extra assistance, it is important to assist within your skills and competencies. This guide will help prepare you to respond appropriately in the event of a crisis and will be most useful when used in conjunction with the Mental Health First Aid course.

This guide has been produced to:

- help you to recognise when a student may be in difficulty
- provide advice to help you respond/refer appropriately and effectively
- remind you of the sources of support within the university
- raise awareness of issues relating to student mental health.

A guide for CSU staff

What you can do:

- listen
- give the student time to talk
- understand the situation from the student's point of view
- be sympathetic and not dismissive
- make appropriate referrals
- remember that you cannot solve all the student's problems
- be careful not to take responsibility for the student's emotional state or actions.

The health and welfare of all members of the university is everyone's concern.

This guide gives you advice on dealing with issues and managing crises. It is important to be prepared for emergencies, but you should be aware that they occur only occasionally and that professional advice in regard to emergency situations is available from Security, the Critical Incident Response Group and the Student Counselling Service.

Please note: while some of this content may appear to be more easily applied to on-campus students, the core principles can be applied to all Australia-based students.

Student counsellors

You may also wish to contact the Student Counselling Service for advice on matters of student mental health and wellbeing. Student counsellors work closely with university staff and are available for consultation if you are concerned about a student in difficulty or distress. You can email them at counselling@csu.edu.au

Mental Health First Aid

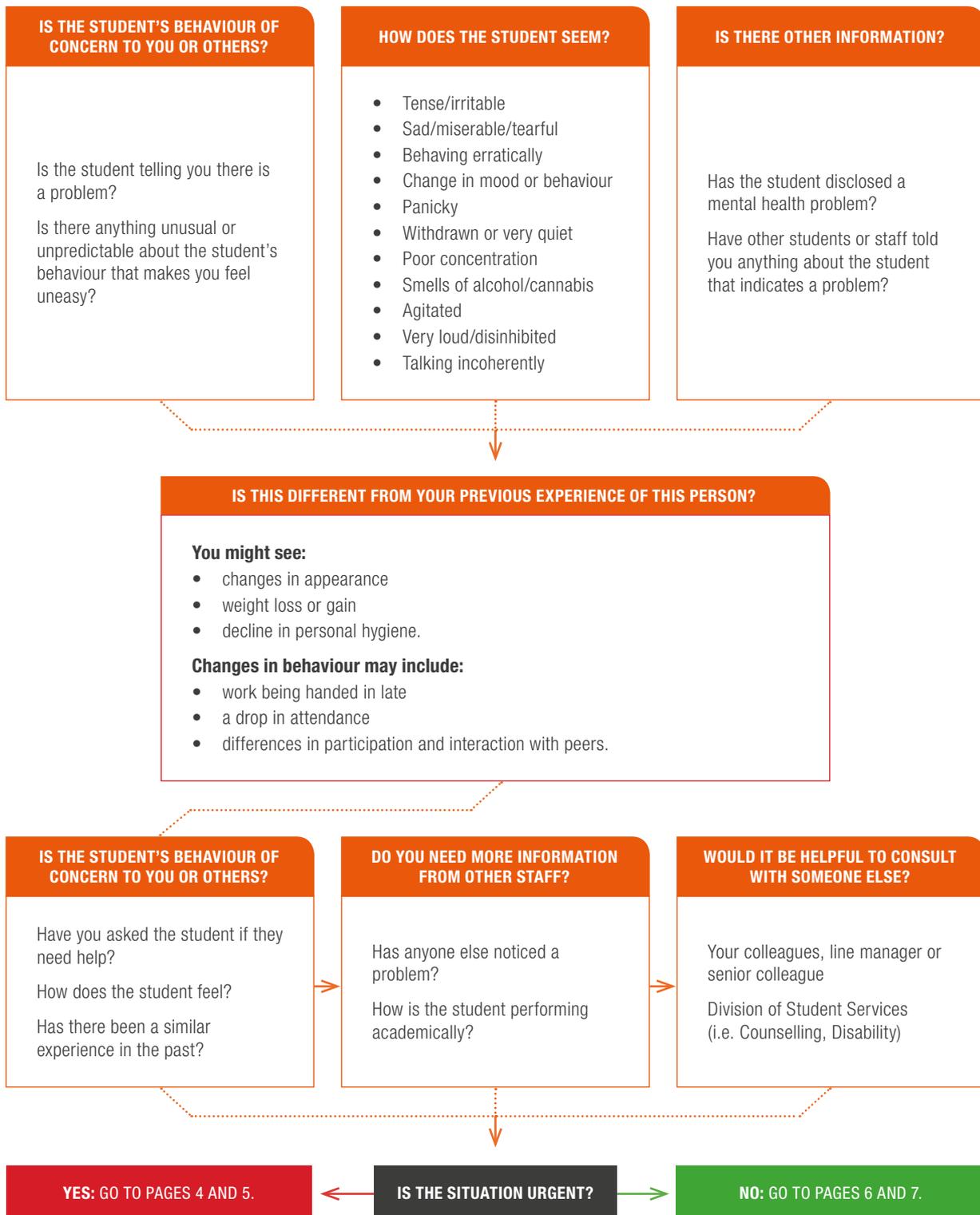
Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) courses provide training in assisting people with a mental health issue or in a mental health crisis. CSU runs these courses intermittently each year. For more information, visit csu.edu.au/division/student-services/useful-information/resources

Campus Security contacts

Install the CSU Safe smart phone app from: csu.edu.au/csusafe
CSU Security: ext. 400

These guidelines are reproduced with permission from the University of Edinburgh: Helping Distressed Students, July 2011. These guidelines are a general set of recommendations. Each person is unique. It is important to tailor your support to that person's needs.

IDENTIFYING DISTRESSED STUDENTS



SITUATIONS REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ACTION

If the risk to the student or others is high, contact CSU Security on ext. 400 or access CSU Safe on your mobile. CSU Security will escalate the situation to the Critical Incident Response Group. Contact emergency services by dialing 000 or call the relevant state crisis support line. These numbers are listed on page 8.

A situation becomes urgent if the student:

- may be at risk of serious self-harm
- expresses suicidal thoughts or threatening thoughts towards others
- is violent or threatening violence to people or property
- has completely stopped functioning as normal
- seems very disoriented and out of touch with reality
- reports they have just been sexual assaulted or raped
- is in any other situation that creates risk to the student or others.

In all situations when encountering a distressed student either on campus or online:

Do:

- stay calm
- prioritise your own safety and then that of others
- ensure safe access to an exit if you need it
- if considered safe, engage with the student
- talk slowly, gently, simply and firmly
- be clear on what you can and cannot do
- whenever possible make sure that you have additional support available such as an MHFA-trained staff member
- if you feel comfortable to do so, ask the student if they are having thoughts of suicide or self-harm
- if the student is present and at immediate risk, stay with them until the current risk or crisis has passed
- make sure that you debrief by talking the situation through with a colleague, line supervisor or the Student Counselling Service
- document your interaction with the student.

Don't:

- trivialise the issue
- try to solve it on your own
- be afraid of tears
- try to change their mind or argue
- become the main source of support if possible
- make promises you can't keep, especially the promise to keep it secret
- touch or try to restrain the person or block access to an exit
- put yourself at risk or in harm's way.

STUDENT IDENTIFIED AS AT RISK

IF THE STUDENT WILL ACCEPT HELP

In and out of office hours

- Take steps to minimise risks, explaining the steps you are taking and the duty of care you have to the student's safety.
- Determine whether the student is willing to speak to an MHFA-trained staff member.
- Encourage the student to speak with CSU's Student Counselling Service or an outside service (e.g. GP or relevant state support line listed on page 8).
- Contact CSU Security on ext. 400 or using CSU Safe on your mobile. If this situation is life threatening, contact emergency services on 000 or the relevant state crisis support service (listed on page 8).
- If the student lives on campus, contact Residence Life (with the student's permission).
- Encourage the student to contact someone they feel supported by.

If outside of regular business hours (9am to 5pm)

- Encourage the student to contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.
- With permission, follow up the next day with the student's course director or with Residence Life. If unsure, make contact with CSU's Student Counselling Service.

IF THE STUDENT WILL NOT ACCEPT HELP

In and out of office hours

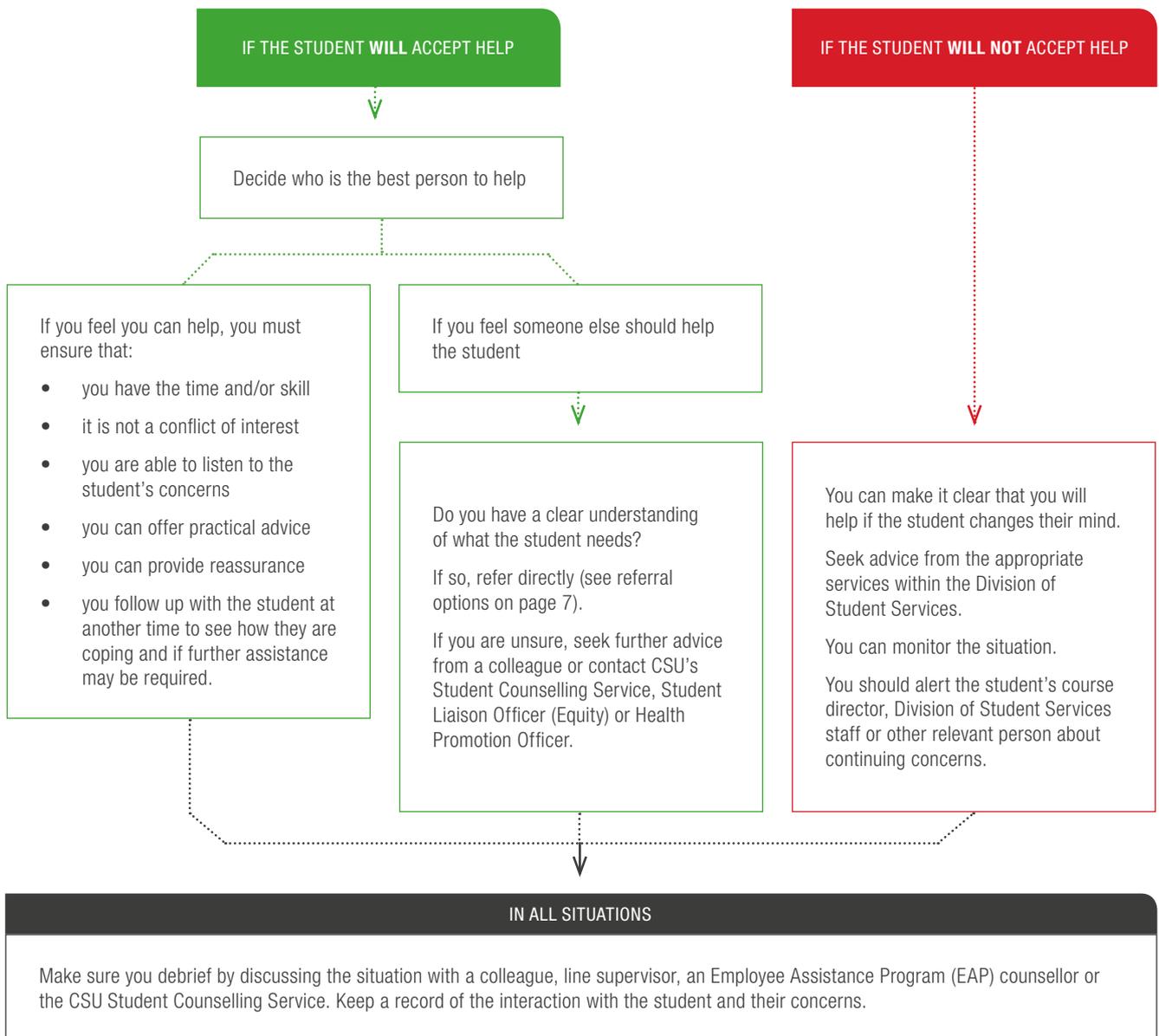
- Take steps to minimise risk, explaining the steps you are taking and the duty of care that you have to the student's safety.
- Contact CSU Security on ext. 400 or access CSU Safe on your mobile phone.
- Contact 000 for emergency support or contact the relevant state crisis support service listed on page 8.
- Contact CSU student counsellors who may be able to offer assistance.
- Contact Residence Life if the student is known to be an on-campus student.
- Encourage the student to contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.
- Contact CSU's Student Counselling Service the next day if the matter is not resolved.
- With permission, follow up the next day with the student's course director or with Residence Life if the student is known to reside on campus.

IF THE SITUATION DOES NOT REQUIRE IMMEDIATE ACTION

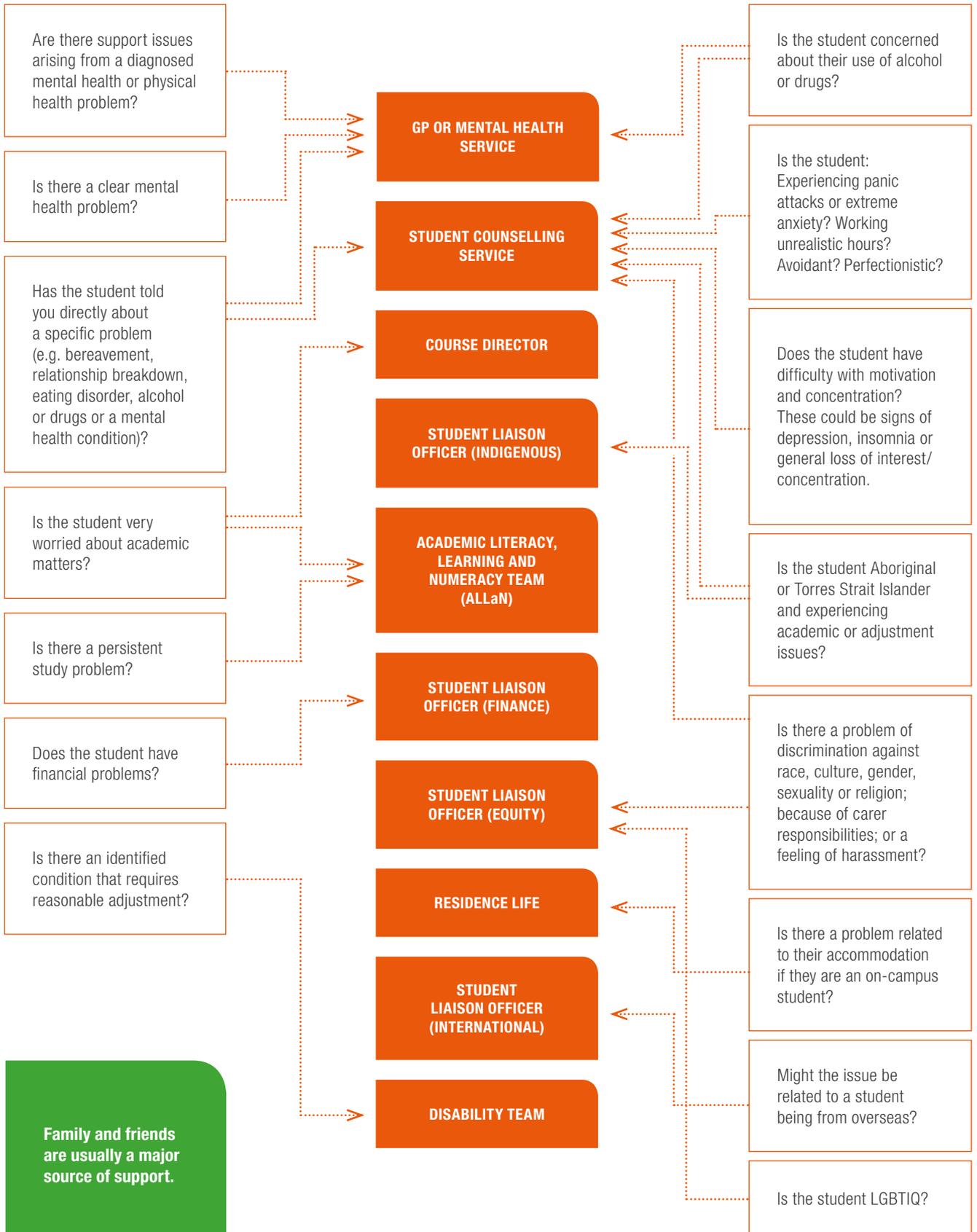
Non-urgent distress

A situation is not considered urgent if there is no immediate risk to the student or others. The student may present as:

- depressed, anxious and/or stressed
- homesick, lonely and/or isolated
- having relationship problems
- suffering from low self-esteem
- bereaved
- having unexplained study or money problems
- having experienced discrimination against race, gender, sexuality or religion.



REFERRAL OPTIONS



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Identifying sources of support

It is not always possible to know what the best kind of support might be. The student may have more than one problem, or the initial problem may not be the most central.

If the student's safety is not at immediate risk, refer them to an appropriate support service. If the matter is urgent and the student is at risk, contact 000.

Offering support directly

If you offer support yourself, you must ensure that:

- you have sufficient time within the context of your other commitments to do this
- it does not conflict with other aspects of your role
- you have access to professional advice
- you seek advice from colleagues or the Division of Student Services if you have persistent concerns
- you seek advice from the Student Counselling Service if you are unsure how to address a student's issue or if the student is in crisis
- support for yourself can also come from the Employee Assistance Program (csu.edu.au/division/hr/staff-concerns/employee-assistance-program).

Remember – you are not solely responsible for a student's emotional state.

Confidentiality

Do not disclose personal information about students to anyone outside the university, including parents, without the student's explicit consent.

If the parents wish to contact a student, you can offer to forward a communication or tell the student they have been in touch.

Treat personal information about students with discretion.

Do not promise absolute confidentiality. Advise the student that you may have to consult a colleague as safety concerns override confidentiality and privacy.

The CSU's Student Counselling Service offers information to support all staff who may wish to discuss their concerns about students in difficulty.

Campus security contacts

All campuses* – internal dial 400
– mobile/external 1800 931 633
* except **Wangaratta** – Security 03 5725 2767

State crisis support services

New South Wales

NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511

Victoria

NURSE-ON-CALL* 1300 60 60 24

* To be called from a mobile phone if not calling from Victoria

South Australia

Mental Health Triage service 13 14 65

Northern Territory

Mental Health Service 1800 NT CATT

Western Australia

Mental Health Emergency Response Line

Metro 1300 555 788

Peel 1800 676 822

Rural Link 1800 552 002

Mon–Fri: 4:30pm–8:30am

Saturday, Sunday, public holidays: 24 hours

Tasmania

Mental Health Services Helpline 1800 332 388

Interstate callers 03 6166 6333

Queensland

Health information and advice 13 HEALTH

Australian Capital Territory

Mental Health Triage 1800 629 354

National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence

Counselling Service 1800 RESPECT

Alternative 24-hour support

Lifeline..... 13 11 14

lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467

suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Additional Crisis Contacts

student.csu.edu.au/services-support/health-wellbeing/counselling/crisis

CSU support services

Student Central

Submit an online enquiry form at student.csu.edu.au/services-support/student-central or browse their knowledge base.

Student Central 1800 ASK CSU (1800 275 278)

Student Counselling Service

Students can make their own appointments via student.csu.edu.au/counselling

Counselling Self-help Resources

student.csu.edu.au/services-support/health-wellbeing/resources

If you are concerned about a student or are not sure who to speak with, please contact:

Jon Wilby

Manager, Student Wellbeing | Division of Student Services
Charles Sturt University

Leeds Parade, Orange NSW 2800 Australia

Tel: +61 2 6365 7589 Email: jwilby@csu.edu.au

If you are working with students who need any further information, they can be referred to the following pages in the Student Portal.

Special Consideration, Academic Advice and Appeals

student.csu.edu.au/study/academic-advice

Academic Literacy, Learning and Numeracy

student.csu.edu.au/study/ALLaN

Careers Hub

student.csu.edu.au/services-support/careers

CSU Outreach

<http://student.csu.edu.au/study/skills/outreach>

Disability Service

student.csu.edu.au/services-support/disability

Equity and Diversity

student.csu.edu.au/support/equity-diversity

Health Promotions Officer

student.csu.edu.au/services-support/health-wellbeing/health

Indigenous Services

indigenous.csu.edu.au

International Student Support Officers

student.csu.edu.au/services-support/international

LGBTIQ services

student.csu.edu.au/services-support/health-wellbeing/lgbti-ally-program

Mature age students support

student.csu.edu.au/services-support/mature-aged-students

Residence Life

student.csu.edu.au/uni-life/residences

Request for Temporary Accommodation

student.csu.edu.au/uni-life/residences/requests-forms/temporary

Sexual assault

student.csu.edu.au/services-support/health-wellbeing/sexual-assault

csu.edu.au/respect



1800 ASK CSU (1800 275 278)



counselling@csu.edu.au



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