

EAO Supervisor Newsletter- September Issue

As many workers return to campus for the first time in months, and some who never left adjust to the changes the fall semester has brought, supervisors may need to support employees in crisis. Below, we've shared some guidance from the EAO's Recognize, Response, Refer: Suicide Prevention Training to help you recognize the signs of suicide and significant distress, respond to an employee or coworker, and refer them to the appropriate resources.

Recognizing the signs of a crisis is the first step in offering support. Look for:

- **Changes in behavior or appearance:** Someone in distress might exhibit a mood or speech that seems unusually slower, more depressed, or more hyperactive, or appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. They may behave strangely or show changes from their typical personal hygiene. Their emotional responses may seem exaggerated and inappropriate for a given situation, or they may be angry or aggressive for no clear reason.
- **Significant lifestyle changes:** They may struggle with workplace performance, or miss work frequently without an explanation. They may mention stressors outside of work, including negative life changes or losses.
- **Behavioral clues:** In general, take note of actions that are riskier and more impulsive than usual. Someone in distress might give away prized possessions and take other steps to get their affairs in order, including asking about benefits like life insurance. They may also take steps to obtain a weapon or other means to harm themselves.

Verbal clues: Sometimes, people in distress may talk about feeling hopeless, trapped, in pain, or a burden to others. They may make direct verbal statements about wanting to harm themselves, like "I wish I were dead". Other times, they may say something

indirectly, like "My family would be better off without me" or "I won't be around much longer".

If you are worried about an employee, respond! Many people are worried about finding the right thing to say. However, any genuine response can help someone in a crisis. It is a myth that asking someone if they are suicidal is dangerous or could put the idea in their head. A social connection and providing an opportunity to talk can be very supportive. Here are some tips for having a conversation with your employee about your concerns:

- Find a private place to speak.
- Above all, practice empathy and listen actively. Show the person that you genuinely care about them.
- Share your observations in detail, and why they make you feel concerned. Don't express judgment, provide a diagnosis, or minimize their situation. For example, you might say something like this:
 - "I've noticed that you have missed work a number of times in the last two weeks. Is everything okay?"
 - "When you said you won't be here much longer, it made me wonder if you are having thoughts of suicide."
- Try not to lead the conversation or put words in the other person's mouth. For example, avoid statements like "You don't want to kill yourself, do you?" and be direct, ask if they are thinking of killing themselves rather than "hurting" themselves.
- Thank them for sharing their feelings or for seeking help.
- Have resources ready to share.

When speaking with someone in distress, remember that you can use the Employee Assistance Office, LifeMatters, the suicide prevention lifeline, or University Health Services to provide consultations and support. It is never your job to make any kind

of clinical diagnosis or complete a full risk assessment. You can get employees connected with resources by:

- **Clearly explaining the benefits of using a resource.** A variety of free and confidential resources are available to employees. You can help make a referral by sharing that EAO, LifeMatters, and other providers are safe places to process and understand complicated situations.
- **Providing information about what actually happens when you seek services.** Some people will feel more comfortable seeking help if someone they trust, like a manager or coworker, demystifies the process.
- **Offering to accompany them to the building or sit with them while they make a call to a resource.**
- **Calling 911 if the situation is life-threatening.** If you call 911 or non-emergency police numbers, request a Crisis Intervention Team trained officer.

Employee Assistance Office (EAO)

- Call 608-263-2987 to schedule an appointment
- Email eao@mailplus.wisc.edu
- Appointments are 7:30 – 4:30 p.m.
- Monday through Friday
- Lowell Hall, 610 Langdon St.
- www.eao.wisc.edu

The EAO offers presentations on suicide prevention, stress management, and much more to UW employees. If you are interested in having a counselor speak to your organization, please reach out to eao@mailplus.wisc.edu or 608-263-2987.

LifeMatters

- Call 800-634-6433 to consult with counselor immediately
- Text “hello” to 61295
- Counselors are off-campus
- Call any time, day or night
- www.mylifematters.com (password is Bucky1)

University Health Services 24-hour line: 608-265-5600 (for UW-Madison students only)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-237-8255 (TALK)

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-someone-else/>

Crisis Text Line: Text “HOME” to 741741 OR search crisistextline.org/referrals

Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255

Trevor Lifeline (LGBTQ+): call 1-866-488-7386 OR text “Trevor” to 1-202-304-1200

A New Way to Access EAO Services

“Virtually In-Person” is a virtual counseling format that employees can access from within the Employee Assistance Office at the Lowell Center. We have a quiet, comfortable, and confidential space in our office where employees can come and connect with a counselor using a video phone.

"Virtual In-Person" is a great option if you or one of your employees lack a confidential space within your own work area to talk with a counselor. The EAO will always have someone onsite to help facilitate these sessions if you are not confident or comfortable using technology.

To make an appointment, please call our office at 608-263-2987 or e-mail eao@mailplus.wisc.edu and let us know you'd like to meet “Virtually In-Person.”

LifeMatters Monthly Resources and Promotions

Our affiliate partner, LifeMatters, offers promotions, newsletters, webinars and more! Go to mylifematters.com and sign in with Bucky2.

This month's promotional content includes:

LifeMatters Newsletter:

- Setting Limits on the Virtual World
- Choosing Happiness
- Creating a Re-entry Budget

- Reducing Summer Cooling Costs

The Advisor for Managers and HR:

- Communicating Across Divides
- Difficult Conversations

Available Trainings and Presentations

(contact hpals@empathia.com to learn more)

- Reentry for Leaders
- Reentry for Employees
- School's Back in Session: Another Year Amid the Pandemic
- Parenting in a Pandemic: Support Group

Posters: Taking Care of You and Finding Joy

Access this information and more at www.mylifematters.com
password: bucky2