



# Guide to Assisting Trainees in Distress

As a program administrator, you are frequently the first person to notice when a trainee may need additional help and support. This document is intended to assist Program Administrators in identifying levels of escalation needed and resources available.

This information page is to accompany Queen's University Gold Folder (see Appendix A). The information in the Gold Folder can apply to any colleague or trainee in distress. It references specific Queen's University information which applies to all trainees. Residents (MOH funded) also have access to PARO and hospital-based resources.

## **Confidentiality and Safety:**

Every effort is made to respect trainee confidentiality. However, there may be a need, if there is an imminent risk of harm to the individual, to involve the Program Director and/or others, despite the wishes of the distressed person. When in doubt, discuss this with the Program Director or other faculty leadership. The personal safety of all involved is of highest priority.

## **Key Program and PGME Contacts:**

1. Program Director
2. Associate, Assistant or Site Director
3. Academic Advisor
4. Trusted colleague of the trainee (trainee or faculty member)
5. Family member/close friend
6. PGME Wellness Office
7. Student Wellness Office
8. PGME staff



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## Possible Actions:

- **PGME [Wellness Office](#)**: Arrange an appointment with either Dr. Melissa Andrew, Director Resident Wellness, or Dr. Bryce Durafourt, Wellness Advisor. Or, by phone at (613) 533-2543
- **School of Medicine dedicated counsellor**: [Anna Paolucci](#); or, by phone at: (613) 533-6000 x78264; or [Counselling Service](#), located on the ground floor of Mitchell Hall, 69 Union Street. Or, by phone at: (613) 533-6000 ext. 78264
- **[PARO Helpline](#)**: 1-866-HELP-DOC (1-866-435-7362). Available anywhere in Ontario 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All calls are strictly confidential and cannot be traced.
- **[OMA's Physician Health Program - Wellness Support Line](#)**: (1-800-851 6606) or by email at: [php@cma.org](mailto:php@cma.org). This is a confidential counselling service and callers can remain anonymous.
- **[KHSC Employee and Family Assistance Program](#)**: professional and confidential counselling. The trainee can speak immediately with a counsellor if they are in crisis.
- **[Regional learner advocate](#)**: If they are geographically located outside of Kingston and require assistance.
- **PGME [Health and Wellness webpages](#)**: additional resources.

The following [Policies](#) may apply and be useful in guiding your response:

- [Assessment, Promotion, and Appeals](#) (PGME)
- [Fatigue Risk Management](#) (PGME)
- [Harassment and Discrimination](#) (Queen's University)
- [Resident Harassment and Discrimination Investigation Procedure](#) (PGME)
- Health and Safety
- [Informal Feedback Guidelines](#) (PGME)
- [Physician Behaviour in the Professional Environment](#) (CPSO)
- [Resolution of Resident Conflict with Attending Physician Supervisor](#) (COFM)
- [Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence including Students](#) (Queen's University)



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## Safety and Emergency Procedures:

If you are concerned about their safety or wellbeing and can't reach a trainee, it's important to contact the PGME Office and to work with [Campus Security](#) (see [Trainee Safety Policy](#)) to determine if a Wellness Check is required to be initiated.

**The PGME Office must be notified in advance if a program is going to action a call to Campus Security and Emergency Services. Under no circumstance should a program attend a trainee's home or seek to locate the trainee themselves.**

## Sample Guide to an interaction:

*(Please also refer to interaction infographic for easy visual prompts)*

1. **Calm welcome:** "We can help you" approach. Get a contact number if they are on the phone and/or leave the location
2. **If in person:** Provide tea/water/juice and a more private location. Or, if on the phone, get the trainee's contact number and their location in case the call is cut off or the trainee leaves before a plan is put in place.
3. **Obligations:** Let them know that you understand that they may not want anyone else to be contacted but that you are obliged to contact someone else for assistance if you are concerned for their health, safety and/ or wellness.
4. **Listen:** Determine the distress/crisis and ask if you can help them with a plan.
5. **Contact options:** Ask if there is someone you can contact on their behalf.
6. **Remind them of options:** People to talk to, in no particular order, include but are not limited to:
  - *The Program Director or key local faculty (Site Director for FM) determines next steps.*
  - *If the Program Director is not available, the Associate / Assistant Program Director, faculty, or Site Director (FM) should be called.*
  - *If the Associate / Assistant Program Director/ Site Director is not available a trusted colleague (resident or faculty member) should be called.*
  - *If a trusted colleague is not available a family member or close friend should be called. Ask for consent – unless it is an absolute emergency*
  - *If the above is not helpful, call the trainee's Academic Advisor.*
  - *If the above is not available, ask the trainee if they wish you to call their personal Family Physician's office for support.*



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- *If the above is not available, contact the Wellness Office/local wellness lead. Or call 911*
- *Contact SOM dedicated counsellor, [Anna Paolucci](#), or [Student Wellness Services](#)*
- *PARO Helpline or OMA Physician Health Program as linked above*

## Additional Resources for Staff:

- **[PA Professional Development Fund](#)**: can be utilized for wellness related training.
- **PGME Office**: support/advice/incident debrief
- **Queen's University [Care Support Services](#)**: Includes information on identifying levels of escalation (from mildly upset to a crisis)
- **[Student Wellness](#) – [Student, Staff, Faculty Trainings](#)**:
  - Applied Suicide Invention Skills Training (ASIST) – 2 full days
  - Identifying and Responding to Someone in Distress – 1 hour
  - Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)
  - Online Suicide Alertness Training – 2 hours
  - safeTALK – 3 hours

## Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP):

- **[Telus Health](#)** (*Queen's University employees*)
- **[Homewood Health](#)** (*KHSC employees*)
- *Speak to a counsellor*
- *Managing Stress – online program*

## Gold Folder

# Assisting Colleagues in Distress



### Recognize

In your role as an employee at Queen's University, you may be the first person to see signs that a colleague is in distress, or they may have come to you specifically to ask for your help. Use this guide to familiarize yourself with common signs of distress, and the steps you can take to help.



### Respond

It is okay to feel uncertain about how to respond. You don't need to have all the answers. Being there to support your colleague is often the most valuable thing to do.

### Approach

If possible, move to a discreet and appropriate environment. It is okay to ask and express concern. Be specific about the behaviour that worries you. Say what you see.

### Listen

Listen non-judgmentally, without bias, having an open view. Listen actively, ask open-ended questions, and help them feel heard and understood.

### Support

Acknowledge their thoughts and feelings in a compassionate way. Offer hope and reassure them you care and want to help.



### Refer

Your role is not to diagnose or treat, but you can share that confidential help is available. Early intervention plays a key role in creating healthy and respectful workplaces. Help make them aware of the resources available.

#### If a colleague does not want help:

- Respect their decision. Accepting or refusing assistance must be left up to the employee, except in emergencies, when life is in danger.
- If they change their mind, they can access resources in the future.



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## Signs of Distress

### Mental Health Concern

*"I am concerned about the general well-being of my colleague and would like to offer support."*

**Examples:**

- Unusual behaviour
- High levels of irritability
- Changes in relationships or social behaviour
- Notable changes in energy levels or appearance
- Lack of social support

### High Level of Distress

*"I am concerned about some recent behaviour that is out of character for my colleague."*

**Examples:**

- Marked changes in mood, appearance, or behaviour
- Impairment with daily tasks
- Withdrawal from social interactions or work
- Substance use concerns
- Physical health concerns

### Imminent Risk of Harm

*"I am concerned about my colleague's safety or the safety of others."*

**Examples:**

- Expressed feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, or hopelessness
- Expressed feelings of powerful guilt or shame
- Expressed references to suicide



**If there is an imminent risk of harm, act immediately.**

- First, call 911
  - Second, call Queen's 24-hour Emergency Report Centre: (613)-533-6111
- Blue lights with emergency telephones are located throughout campus.

### Kingston and Queen's Resources

#### Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)

For 24-hour, confidential EFAP support call: 1-(877)-789-7572

#### Employee Wellness Services

employee.wellness@queensu.ca  
queensu.ca/humanresources/intranet

#### Queen's 24-hour Emergency Report Centre

(613)-533-6111

#### Campus Security and Emergency Services 24/7

(613)-533-6733 (inquiries)

#### Addiction and Mental Health Services (Kingston)

Crisis (613)-544-4229 or 1-866-616-6005  
Administration (613)-544-1356

#### 24-hour Community Crisis Line

(613)-544-4229

### Ontario Resources

#### Bounce Back Ontario

A free skill building program managed by the Canadian Mental Health Association  
1-(866)-345-0224

#### Health Connect Ontario

Connect with a Registered Nurse to discuss your health 24/7  
Call 811  
TTY 1-(866)-797-0000

#### Mental Health Helpline - Ontario (Help in 170 languages)

1-(866)-531-2600

#### Ontario Mental Health

Call 211  
1-(877)-330-3213

Thank you for playing a vital role in creating a healthy and respectful workplace at Queen's University.



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**Appendix B – KHSC resources for supporting staff well-being Feb 2025**

## **Supporting Staff Psychological Health & Well-being at KHSC**

*KHSC Staff Wellness Website:* <https://kingstonhsc.ca/staff-wellness>

### **Psychological Health & Safety (PHS) Strategy**

KHSC is finalizing a Psychological Health & Safety (PHS) Framework and Action Plan guided by the *National Standard for Psychological Health & Safety in the Workplace*. The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Reduce workplace stressors and risks impacting staff well-being
- Enhance leadership support and accountability in fostering a safe, respectful culture
- Promote staff mental wellness, resilience, and psychological safety
- Create a structured, ongoing plan for improvement

*More details on the PHS Action Plan will be shared as it is finalized.*

### **Workplace Mental Wellness Support**

**KHSC's Workplace Mental Wellness Practitioner**, Orlana Bourgoin, is a registered psychotherapist and a member of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW). Orlana provides confidential support to all KHSC staff, offering:

- Confidential one-on-one support and referrals
- Team huddles and psychoeducation on psychological health & safety topics
- Support for leaders in fostering psychologically safe teams
- Facilitation of Emotional Defusing and CISDs

Contact: [obourgoin@kingstonhsc.ca](mailto:obourgoin@kingstonhsc.ca) or KGH ext. 6784

### **Available Staff Supports & Resources**

#### **Mental Health & Crisis Support**

- **Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP) – Homewood Health** (24/7 confidential support). Call **1-800-663-1142** | [Homewood Health](#)
- **LifeSpeak** – On-demand mental health & wellness learning platform. [KHSC LifeSpeak Portal](#)
- **24/7 Mental Health Crisis Line: 613-544-4229**
- **CAMH Suicide Crisis Helpline: Dial 988**

#### **Debriefing & Support After Workplace Distress or Trauma**

KHSC offers three types of debriefing sessions to help staff process workplace challenges in a safe and supportive environment:



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- **Hot Debrief (Stop5):** Real-time, case-specific debrief (e.g., post-resuscitation, cardiac arrest, trauma) to review successes, improvement areas, and actionable next steps. Duration: 5 minutes.  
Facilitated by: Team Lead/ Physician/ Charge Nurse
- **Emotional Defusing Sessions:** A confidential, voluntary session designed to help staff process stressful workplace experiences and reduce emotional exhaustion. The purpose is to provide a safe space for peer support, coping strategies, and stress reduction without reviewing policies or assigning blame.  
Facilitated by: Manager/Director/Leader Delegate/ Workplace Mental Wellness Practitioner
- **Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD):** A structured debrief led by a trained facilitator, conducted 24 hours to one week after a traumatic event (e.g., patient suicides, severe medical errors, acts of violence). The purpose is to help staff process the emotional impact, normalize stress reactions, and provide professional support and referrals if needed.  
Facilitated by: Workplace Mental Wellness Practitioner or Homewood Health (EFAP)
- **Code White Debriefs:** A facilitated discussion following a Code White (violent or aggressive incident) to review what happened, identify areas for improvement, and ensure staff support. The purpose is to help teams reflect, debrief, and strengthen safety responses while ensuring emotional support for those involved.  
Facilitated by: Manager/Director/ Team Lead

## Workplace Accommodations:

Through the Disability Management Program (DMP), employees receive support to optimize medical treatment and explore workplace accommodation options. Occupational Health Nurses (OHNs) and Return-to-Work Specialists (RTWs) work closely with staff and their healthcare providers to assess and address both physical and psychological needs/accommodations in the workplace. Accommodations can be temporary or permanent and can include, for example, shift modifications, exemptions from attendance awareness programs for chronic conditions, adjustments in assignments, time off for treatment needs, and other workplace supports.

## Ethical Guidance & Support

David Campbell, KHSC Ethicist, is available for confidential staff support for ethical concerns, moral distress, or difficult workplace decisions.

Contact: **KGH site:** [david.campbell@kingstonhsc.ca](mailto:david.campbell@kingstonhsc.ca) or KGH ext. 8146, or **HDH site:** Kelly Collins, Director, Spiritual Health, Mission & Ethics, HDH ext. 2231, [kelly.collins@kingstonhsc.ca](mailto:kelly.collins@kingstonhsc.ca)

*For staff: For more information, resources and the ASSIST Decision-making guide visit the KHSCNow Intranet page.*

## Wellness & Recognition Initiatives

- **KHSC Fitness Centres and Corporate Gym Memberships:** Onsite fitness centers at HDH and KGH for current KHSC staff and volunteers who have purchased an annual membership. Corporate discounts for City of Kingston wellness memberships, Curves/Jenny Craig, Goodlife Fitness, etc.



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- **On-site Massage Therapy:** Available for staff at KGH on Wednesdays and HDH on Thursdays. Staff can pre-book their massage session directly with Kristin via the link [Kristin Kelly > Book Now \(clinicsense.com\)](#). The cost for a 30 min appointment is \$60 (payable to Kristin directly). Staff with health benefits may submit their receipt for reimbursement. Please call x 4389 if you have questions.
- **Peer Partner Program:** The KHSC Peer Partner Support Program is designed to support and protect the psychological and emotional well-being of staff by offering informal, confidential help through trained peers.
- **Animal Therapy program** for staff and patients with dogs who have been certified through St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog program. Therapy Dogs provide affection and comfort to patients and staff. Leaders can book their unit/dept for a therapy dog visit here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/animal-therapy-for-khsc-staff-tickets-765650811187?aff=oddtcreator>
- **Silent meditation:** The Chapel at the KGH site is open 24/7 for individual silent meditation practice.
- **Relax & Unwind:** Massage chairs are now available in some staff break spaces throughout the hospital.
- **Staff Courtyard @ KGH site:** KHSC staff can check out the Staff Courtyard off the Dietary 1 corridor at the KGH site to get some fresh air and re-energize. The courtyard is open from May through October.
- **KHSC Wellness @Work Advisory Group:** KHSC values staff health and wellness and recognizes the importance of a holistic approach that supports physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.
- **Mindful Moments Blog:** Uncover the intricacies of the 15 psychosocial risk factors influencing psychological health and safety at KHSC. Join us as we shine a spotlight on a specific factor, delving into ways to spark change and offer support for ourselves and our colleagues.
- **Mindful Moments Resources:** Discover key resources and information to support psychological health and safety for KHSC staff and leaders.
- **Daily Actions for Happiness:** Discover daily inspiration on KHSC Now Staff Central.
- **Kindness Chronicles: Cultivating a Positive and Grateful Atmosphere to Shape KHSC Culture:** To sustain this uplifting environment, share your success stories and personal journeys or give a shout-out to something positive at KHSC.



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