

Recognize

Engage

Acknowledge

Connect to

Help

**Employee Guidelines for**  
supporting colleague's mental  
health and well-being

Please contact  
[HRaccessibility@ontariotechu.ca](mailto:HRaccessibility@ontariotechu.ca) if you  
should require an alternate format.

# Recognize warning signs



As an Ontario Tech University employee, you're in a key position to notice warning signs that may indicate that a colleague needs assistance. **You do not need to be a counsellor/therapist to recognize the warning signs or to connect someone to support resources.** All employees can use these guidelines to support their colleagues. You may observe:

- Regular distraction or cannot focus on tasks
- Decreased socialization, performance, or increased procrastination
- Irritable, impatient, anxious, or pervasively sad
- Changes in eating patterns or sleep habits, lack of energy, tiredness, or fatigue



## Visible signs

The colleague demonstrates...

- Risky behaviour
- Panic or anxious behaviour
- Aggressive or paranoid behaviour
- Tearfulness or difficulties making eye contact
- A change in appearance or personal hygiene
- Burn marks, cuts or scars



## Verbal signs

The colleague discloses...

- Thoughts of suicide or harm to others
- Worries about coping with life stressors
- Disorganized speech
- Feelings of sadness, hopelessness or helplessness
- Traumatic experiences (e.g. sexual assault or bullying)



## Emotional signs

The employee ...

- Has an instinct that something is wrong
- Senses isolation or withdrawal

## Privacy Act (FIPPA)

Staff and faculty are required to comply with Ontario's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) which, among other things, requires that the university protects the personal information of its employees from improper collection and disclosure.

## Disclosure within Ontario Tech

Within Ontario Tech, employees may disclose personal information about employees only with the employee's consent, or if the person is in danger of harming themselves or another person.<sup>1</sup>

## Disclosure outside of Ontario Tech

Outside of the university, employees may disclose personal information about employees only with the employee's consent, or if the person is in danger of harming themselves or another person.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Any disclosure of personal information without consent requires careful consideration of the circumstances involved. Before you share employee personal information within or outside of Ontario Tech, contact the Privacy Office for advice at [accessandprivacy@ontariotechu.ca](mailto:accessandprivacy@ontariotechu.ca)



# Engage & Acknowledge

**A Acknowledge** the warning signs that the colleague is displaying (trust your instincts). You may consider reaching out to the colleague if you have a good rapport and feel comfortable meeting with them in your office or a neutral space. A colleague may also inform you of their challenges directly.

**Tip:** Speak in direct and clear language.

**B Believe** in the importance of empathy. Show compassion and display a non-judgmental attitude. Show interest and listen actively by recognizing their feelings. This lets colleagues know that someone cares.

**Tip:** Validate what they are going through, do not dismiss how they are feeling.

**C Create** a space where you and the colleague can explore options that may help them. You may be able to refer a colleague to support services including the University's [Employee Family Assistance Program](#).

**Note:** Your colleague may decline your offer of help and that's ok. Respect their decision (except in emergency situations).

**Follow-up** to check-in with your colleague to see how they are doing.

**Your Health:** Access resources to support your well-being, as needed, such as the [Employee Self-Help Guide](#).

"I'm concerned about you. I noticed that you've been distracted in our meetings and seem to be having trouble staying focused. Are you okay?"

"It sounds like you have a lot going on right now."

"That would be a (difficult, upsetting, frustrating, etc.) situation."

"I'd like to support you. Is there anything I can do to help?"

"How about we look at the support options together?"

"There are free, confidential services available to all employees."

"I respect your decision, and I'm here if you'd like to talk."

"How are you doing? I'm here if you'd like to talk."

# Connect To Help

**HIGH** Immediate response is required

**MEDIUM** Immediate crisis response & support to connect with a counsellor

**LOW** Access resources to support your well-being

**Available 24/7**

**On Campus**

Call Security  
905.721.3211 or ext. 2400

**Off Campus**

Call 911

**Available 24/7**

**LifeWorks:  
Employee & Family Assistance  
Program (EFAP)**

Call 1.844.671.3327

Free, confidential support for employees and their dependents

**Available 24/7**

**LifeWorks:  
Employee & Family Assistance  
Program (EFAP)**

Call 1.844.671.3327

LifeWorks, is more than counselling services, supporting multiple dimensions of wellness through financial, legal, and nutrition consultation, LIFT fitness videos, and much more!

For more information about mental health and well-being resources visit the [hr.ontariotechu.ca/wellness-at-work](http://hr.ontariotechu.ca/wellness-at-work)

## List of 24/7 Community Distress Resources

Community Distress Resources	Phone Number
Distress Centre Durham	905.430.2522 and 1.800.452.0688
Durham Mental Health Services: Crisis Access Linkage Line	905.666.0483 and 1.800.742.1890
Ontario Shores Crisis Line	1.800.263.2679
Toronto Distress Centre	416.408.4357

## Campus Connected



Staff and faculty can attend a Campus Connected orientation session for more information on how to engage with students.

Campus Connected is a movement that connects the people on our campus. Members of this movement affirm their ability to engage with others with an attitude of caring and kindness, as well as listen with empathy and without judgment.

Visit [hr.ontariotechu.ca/wellness-at-work/events-initiatives](http://hr.ontariotechu.ca/wellness-at-work/events-initiatives) to register today!