

Early intervention guide



EARLY WARNING SIGNS



Single incident of emotional distress

May have a family history of mental health problems

SYMPTOMS

No symptoms or mild symptoms

- A little distress/worry about everyday concerns that occasionally become out of hand
- Worries about an isolated life event (relationship break-up, death in the family, peer problems, schoolwork stress)
- Negative thoughts about self/world/others
- Able to be calmed down and return to normal functioning

KEY ACTIONS



Make clear to student you have noticed some signs of distress and ask what support you can provide

Implement and schedule short-term mood monitoring and weekly check-ins from an appropriate school staff member

SUPPORT

Parents/carers, teachers, and principals

Can, if appropriate, direct students and parents/carers to the headspace website pages on mental health. These pages give a comprehensive overview of the most common youth mental health issues and provide youth-friendly information and advice



Emerging or occasional difficulties in managing emotional distress

Some symptoms

- Distress/anxiety arises in specific settings (a particular class or situation)
- Intermittent distress in response to one or more life events (parental separation, bullying, clashes with teachers)
- May need help/intervention to return to normal functioning
- Some difficulties in a single area of functioning but generally managing well
- Hostile or irritable behaviour may impact social relationships or academic performance
- Experimentation with substance use



Make clear to student you have noticed some signs of distress and ask what support you can provide

Implement and schedule short-term mood monitoring and weekly check-ins from an appropriate school staff member

Discuss lifestyle interventions such as diet, sleep, routine, physical activity

Suggest guided self-help such as mindfulness activities, meditation or yoga

Discuss a GP referral and connect with family

Speak to your student wellbeing team or Mental Health Practitioner about a formal mental health literacy or psychoeducation program to educate relevant school staff on the student's mental health concern

SEE MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES BELOW

Teachers and principals

Can seek support from:

- School nurse, student wellbeing team
- School-based mental health practitioners (MHPs)
- Student Support Service officers (SSS)
- GP
- Headspace counselling
- Headspace resources
- Beyond Blue resources site includes links for: Helplines; Useful websites; Online interactive programs; Supporting family members with a mental health condition; Drug and alcohol support; Eating disorders and body image; Bullying and cyberbullying; Grief and loss



Significant changes in some areas of usual functioning

May meet criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition

Increasing symptoms

- Increasing distress/anxiety
- Repetitive or obsessive thoughts
- Frequent anxiety attacks
- Withdrawal from usual activities
- Increasingly aggressive or antisocial behaviour
- Occasional self-harm
- Regular substance use



Referral to GP, mental health service or treating clinician

Speak to your student wellbeing team or Mental Health Practitioner about implementing an urgent safety plan with clear strategies and priority actions

Mental health treatment may include psychoeducation, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, substance use work, vocational/functional support, medication, behavioural support strategies

Parents/carers, teachers, principals, and student wellbeing team

Can seek support from:

- Treating clinician
- Mental health practitioners
- Mental health services
- Child and Adolescent/Youth Mental Health Services (CAMHS/CYMHS)



Significant changes in many areas of usual functioning e.g. social and academic

Likely to meet criteria for a mental health condition and need specialised support and treatment

Significant symptoms

- Persistent ongoing distress/anxiety
- Extreme behaviour – severely withdrawn or isolated, school refusal, highly aggressive, obsessive or antisocial behaviour
- Recurrent self-harm
- Suicidal ideation or attempts
- Excessive substance use



Implement urgent safety plan with clear strategies and priority actions, immediate referral to acute service or hospital

Parents/carers, teachers, principals, and student wellbeing team

Can seek support from:

- Treating clinician
- Child and Adolescent/Youth Mental Health Services (CAMHS/CYMHS)
- Emergency services