



*Peer-to-peer guide on how to respond to,  
support, and refer fellow students in distress*

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Colgate University's Mental Health and Wellness adopted best practices from other institutions to bring this booklet — based on the Red Folder Initiative launched by the University of California in 2012 — to Colgate. The Colgate Maroon Folder serves as a reference guide to mental health resources and provides a framework of compassion for supporting students in distress. The framework in this booklet highlights how to recognize symptoms of distress, respond appropriately and compassionately, and how to identify appropriate referrals to campus resources.


College students may feel alone, isolated, and even hopeless when faced with academic and life challenges. Peers exhibiting concerning behaviors in your presence are likely to be experiencing difficulty coping with life stressors. Trust your instincts, say what you see, show that you care, and follow up if someone leaves you feeling worried, alarmed, or threatened. Get help yourself if you could use assistance.

Learning the symptoms of distress will allow you to recognize them when they surface within your friends. This framework of compassion will guide you to act in a caring and proactive way.

### **In this booklet, you will find/**

- Distress-level indicators
- Actionable steps to take when supporting a peer in distress
- Campus resources available for students
- A guide for appropriate intervention

**Safety first:** Your safety and the safety of others is the top priority. If you are concerned about someone's safety, contact the Department of Campus Safety at 315-228-7333 for help.



Be direct. Let the peer know that you've noticed a change and you want to talk. Say what you've noticed, share facts not opinions, and avoid making any judgments or assumptions. Start this conversation in a setting where the peer will feel safe to be open and honest with you. Follow up with residential life staff, the administrative dean's office, or the counseling center if you still have concerns.



**Interpersonal**



Be there to listen. Your priority is to provide a space where your peers can speak and be heard. They need you to be warm, compassionate, and fully present. Listen patiently as you try to understand where they're coming from and take time to affirm their feelings. This is about them, not you.

Be curious. As an active listener, ask open-ended follow-up questions that might help you understand your peers and ensure they feel heard. Most importantly, listen and let them speak.

Share carefully. Most of the time it may not be helpful to share your experiences. Your role is to listen and learn so you can connect the peer to resources. Sometimes, however, it can be helpful for a peer to hear about your experiences with your own well-being or interactions you've had with mental well-being resources, but you do not need to go into much detail.



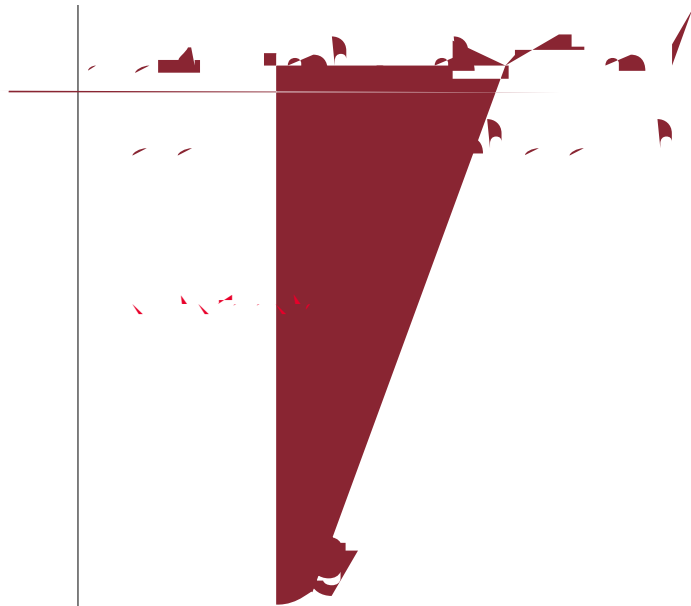
**Determine need** Does the peer need resources for social connection, specialized professional help, or is this an emergency?

**Reaffirm your connection** Sometimes communicating to peers that they may benefit from professional help can make them feel like they are being passed on as a problem or burden. Prevent this by explicitly affirming your connection with them. Again, show your care.

**Help them connect to resources** Peers in distress may need help connecting with a resource. Showing them how to access the resource increases the likelihood that they actually do so. If able, physically accompany your peer to the resource or office.

**Follow up** If possible, reconnect with peers to make sure that they successfully connected with the resources that you suggested.

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When using a University phone to reach an off-campus line, dial “91” before entering the phone number.

Administrative dean on call

91-734-752-2222

Counselor on call

91-734-752-2222

Campus safety

91-734-752-2222

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline


1-800-273-8255  
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Campus safety — Emergency line

91-734-752-2222

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**Administrative Deans** assist students in navigating and understanding administrative policies and procedures and offer advice regarding personal and/or academic matters or information on the many support resources available at Colgate. Contact 315-228-7368 or [admindeans@colgate.edu](mailto:admindeans@colgate.edu). After working hours, the dean on call can be reached by calling campus safety at 315-228-7333.

The **ALANA Cultural Center** serves as a learning and social space that provides multicultural exploration, social justice education, and campus community building for Colgate students, faculty, and staff. Contact 315-228-7330 or [alana@colgate.edu](mailto:alana@colgate.edu).

**Alcohol and Other Drugs Services\*** are designed to educate students about the negative consequences of substance use by utilizing harm-reduction strategies and skill building, as well as correcting misperceptions that many students hold about college alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. Contact 315-228-6403 or [wellness@colgate.edu](mailto:wellness@colgate.edu).

**Athletics and Recreation** is home to the NCAA Division I Raiders, plus more than 50 club and intramural sports programs, numerous fitness facilities, and organized outdoor activities. Visit [colgate.edu/campus-life/athletics](http://colgate.edu/campus-life/athletics) for more information.

The **Department of Campus Safety** is committed to maintaining the safety and security of the campus community in a caring, respectful, and professional manner. Campus safety can be reached 24/7 at [cusafety@colgate.edu](mailto:cusafety@colgate.edu) or 315-228-7333 (for campus emergencies: 315-228-7911).

The **Office of Career Services** empowers students and alumni to engage in strategic exploration, preparation, and action, translating the liberal arts into a lifetime of meaningful work. Staff members offer opportunities to connect with alumni for networking, professional development, and social connections. Contact 315-228-7380 or [ccs@colgate.edu](mailto:ccs@colgate.edu).

The **Center for Learning Technology** ([gtecscs.colgate.edu](http://gtecscs.colgate.edu))

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e **Max A. Shacknai Center for Outreach,  
Volunteerism, and Education (COVE)**  
fosters a commitment to social responsibility  
and engagement through mutually beneficial,  
community-centered partnerships. Contact  
315-228-6880 or [cove@colgate.edu](mailto:cove@colgate.edu).

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An accessible PDF version of the Colgate Red Folder is available to download at [colgate.edu/counseling](http://colgate.edu/counseling).

# COLGATE UNIVER

DEPARTMENT OF COLGATE

## Counseling and Psychological Services

100th Anniversary 1774-2024

Location: Colgate House

Colgate University → [colgate.edu/map](http://colgate.edu/map)