



RECOGNIZE, RESPOND, REFER | SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING

Sample Email Templates for Re-engaging with Students

Engaging with a student around mental health struggles or thoughts of suicide will often be more than a one-time conversation. Regardless of how your first conversation or interaction with a student goes, there are options for how you can continue to be supportive. You may feel flustered in the moment and realize later you wish you had mentioned a certain resource to a student. You may find yourself continuing to interact with a student after offering them resources, and have questions about what to say—or whether you should even acknowledge your previous conversations.

Often there is no single “right” answer around what to do or say. Keep in mind, there are also consultation resources available to faculty and staff through their university counseling center and other university support offices.

To explore this further, consider the following sample scenarios. After describing each situation, we will share some options for following up with that student after the original contact. All examples are shared as sample email messages that could be sent to a student after an interaction, though the language, approach, and tone can also be used to guide an in-person follow up if that is more appropriate given your relationship with the student. Please take care to customize the content in brackets with the resources available at your university.

Example 1

Scenario

You checked in with a student who was open about being in distress. You provided a list of resources to the student, but are not sure that they will utilize the resources right away. After your conversation, you have no immediate concerns about the student’s safety.

Sample Response

Dear Student,

I really appreciated that you let me in on some of what has been going on for you lately when we talked yesterday.

I know I already mentioned this during our conversation, but I do think it could also be helpful for you to talk to a mental health professional. You’ve already taken a big step by letting me know how you’ve been struggling; I just want to make sure that you are getting the best support possible. There are providers at [university counseling center] who are trained to help students feel better, and they are great at working with students who have never been to a mental health counselor before. You can call [university counseling center] for information on how to book an appointment.

I am here to support you in whatever capacity I can, and I am open to checking in again if that would be helpful. I’m also happy to be with you when you call to set up an appointment; please let me know if that would make it even a little easier.

Example 2

Scenario

After a student declines to engage with your attempted check-in, you are still concerned about the student's wellbeing but do not believe the student's situation is an emergency.

Sample Response

Dear Student,

I was just reflecting on our conversation today, and it seems like you have a lot going on right now and are feeling overwhelmed. I am here to support you in whatever capacity I can, but I think it could also be helpful for you to talk to a mental health professional.

[University counseling center] offers a wide range of free services for students, including stress-reduction, group sessions, and individual therapy. They are great at working with students who have never been to a mental health counselor before. You can call [university counseling center] for information on booking an appointment.

[University counseling center] also has a 24/7 mental health crisis line at [campus hotline number]. Please call this number if you ever feel so overwhelmed that you are concerned about your safety or wellbeing. You can also call or text 988 anytime.

I know that class work can be extremely stressful. You are not alone in what you have been feeling and experiencing, and the professionals on campus can help.

Example 3

Scenario

Following up after a more urgent situation with a student has passed.

Sample Response

Dear Student,

I know things were really tough last week, so I just wanted to let you know that I am here if you would like to check in again. I also want you to know that if there is anything I can do to make your transition back into [our classroom, our workplace, our lab] more comfortable, or if there are any ongoing changes that may be helpful, I am open to talking about what you might need.

Example 4

Scenario

After a student declines to engage with your attempted interaction, you have immediate concerns for their safety and believe it to be an urgent situation.

Sample Response

Dear Student,

I received your message and I'm deeply concerned about you. Please come to my office, call, or email me so I can be sure you are okay. I have contacted the [university support office(s)] so they can assist us both with making sure you are safe. [University counseling center] also has a 24/7 mental health crisis line at [campus hotline number].

Example 5

Scenario

You receive an email from a student that suggests the student is experiencing an emergency.

Sample Response

Dear Student,

I am so sorry that you are struggling with such serious issues. Please do not worry about the missed exam for now; spend the time that you need taking care of yourself and your mental health. If you are not already connected to help, [university counseling center] has very comprehensive counseling services. If you ever feel unsafe or just want someone to talk to, you can also call the 24/7 mental health crisis line at [campus hotline number].

To help you with some of your academic concerns, I have reached out to the [university support office(s)]. I promise you are not in trouble in any way. The staff there are really invested in student wellbeing and can help you navigate the different support services available to you.

Please keep in touch, and let me know if there is anything else I can do to help.