When individuals are not coping well, they may become disoriented, dysfunctional and even attempt harm. If a student is in a serious mental health crisis, you may see or hear:

- Suicidal statements or suicide attempts
- Violent or homicidal actions, attempts, or threats (written or verbal)
- Destruction of property or other criminal acts
- Extreme anxiety, panic reactions
- Difficulty communicating (garbled or slurred speech, disjointed thoughts)
- Loss of contact with reality (seeing or hearing things that aren’t there)

If you believe a student may be in imminent danger of harming him/herself or others,

CALL Penn Police
215-573-3333 or 511 on campus

If you need help assessing the situation,

CALL CAPS 215-898-7021
(including nights/weekends to reach CAPS counselor on call)
or accompany the student to CAPS
The college years can be very stressful. Faculty and staff are often the first to witness signs of distress and are in a unique position to offer resources and support. CAPS staff can consult with you about the various ways to help a student in need.

### Academic Signs of Distress
- Deterioration in quality of work
- Missed assignments or appointments
- Repeated absences
- Continual seeking of unusual accommodations (late papers, postponed exams)
- Written assignments expressing hopelessness, isolation, rage, or despair
- Lack of engagement in classes or labs
- Inappropriate disruptions, monopolizing classroom time

### Physical or Psychological Signs of Distress
- Deterioration of physical appearance or hygiene
- Visible increase or decrease in weight
- Excessive fatigue or difficulty sleeping
- Exaggerated personality traits or behaviors (agitation, withdrawal)
- Excessive use of alcohol or other drugs
- Unprovoked anger or hostility
- Irritability, constant anxiety, tearfulness
- Marked changes in concentration and motivation
- Overtly suicidal thoughts, such as referring to suicide as a current option

### Other Factors to Consider
- Direct statements indicating problems such as death of a family member or friend, break-up, academic failure
- Written or verbal statement of hopelessness or finality
- Friends or classmates expressing concerns for a student

### Making a Referral

**What You Can Do**

If a student approaches you with a problem, take the time to listen respectfully and without judgment:
- Talk to the student in private with no distractions
  - Give the student undivided attention; a few minutes of effective listening may help the student feel comfortable deciding what to do next
- Ask if the student has ever talked about her/his concerns with anyone else, including a counselor. If appropriate, encourage the student to talk to a professional
- Listen sensitively, in a non-threatening way
  - Communicate understanding by repeating back what the student has shared
- Be direct, specific, and non-judgmental
- Refer to specific resources and mention that seeking help is a sign of strength

Do not attempt to make a referral when the student is so upset and confused that he/she cannot listen or understand. Wait until the student is calm enough to respond to your suggestions.

Suggest in a caring, supportive manner than the student could benefit from meeting a CAPS counselor. Provide the CAPS # (215-898-7021) and encourage the student to call from your office. Offer to accompany student to CAPS if you are able.

Keep in mind, and mention if necessary:
- CAPS services are free and confidential to all Penn students, including those in graduate and professional school
- CAPS does not limit therapy sessions. Length of counseling is determined by the student and the clinician to meet the student's needs
- Students need not inform parents or insurance about visiting CAPS
- Inform student they can reach a CAPS counselor on call 24/7, at night and on weekends, at 215-898-7021