

UFS Staff Guide to Student Crisis Intervention

***Compiled by Student Counselling and Development
Health and Wellness Centre***

T: +27 51 401 2853 / +27 58 718 5125 / +27 51 505 1989 | E: scd@ufs.ac.za / scdqq@ufs.ac.za / scdsouth@ufs.ac.za | www.ufs.ac.za/kovsiecounselling

*Inspiring excellence, transforming lives
through quality, impact, and care.*



UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA

Notes and Emergency numbers

SADAG UFS Student Careline (24/7, Toll Free)

0800 00 6363

SMS 43302

helpline@sadag.org

ER24 (24/7): 010 205 3057

When you phone the ER24 number, you will get four options:

Option 1 —————→ Medical emergency, if you need an ambulance

Option 2 —————→ Psychological emergency, Bloemfontein Campus

Option 3 —————→ Psychological emergency, South Campus

Option 4 —————→ Psychological emergency, QwaQwa Campus

Please identify yourself as an UFS Corporate Client when the ER24 operator answers.

SCD (7:45 – 16:30) MON – FRI:

***Bloemfontein
Campus***

051 401 2853

SCD@ufs.ac.za

***South
Campus***

051 505 1989

SCDSouth@ufs.ac.za

***Qwaqwa
Campus***

058 718 5125

SCDQQ@ufs.ac.za

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Understanding Mental Health Terms	2
3. Frequently Asked Questions	3
4. Triage system	4
5. What to do in situations of concern and urgency	5
6. Emergency situations	7
7. What to do in emergency situations	8
8. Emergency flowchart	9
9. UFS Mental Health Support	10
10. Crisis intervention protocol	11
11. Examples of situations	12

01 Introduction

Most students in higher education are, unfortunately, facing increasing challenges related to their mental health and well-being. These concerns continue to grow both nationally and globally, with students navigating a wide range of academic, personal, financial, and social pressures. It is no different here at the University of the Free State (UFS).

This guide is one of the initiatives at UFS intended to promote a campus environment that supports mental health and well-being. Staff who have been on the front line of student support for many years may be familiar with much of what follows. However, many staff members encounter students experiencing psychological distress and may not feel equipped or trained to respond. This guide is primarily for them.

This guide has been compiled by staff at Student Counselling and Development (SCD), Division of Student Affairs, Sport, Arts and Culture, and we hope it will assist you in supporting students. SCD has developed a comprehensive, multi-layered approach to student mental health and well-being and works in partnership with SADAG (South African Depression and Anxiety Group) to ensure that registered UFS students have access to 24/7 telephonic counselling and crisis support when needed.

Any feedback or comments are welcome, or please reach out should you require assistance:

DunnCoetzeeM@ufs.ac.za / 051 401 2853.

Dr Munita Dunn-Coetzee
Director: Health and Wellness Centre

Understanding Mental Health Terms



Bizarre Behaviour, Thoughts and Ideas

Sometimes a student might be experiencing a psychotic episode, due to a variety of reasons (sleep deprivation, substance use or linked to a mental health disorder). They may display **strange thoughts, behaviours or ideas**, such as "believing that others can hear their thoughts".



Out of Touch With Reality

Similarly to bizarre behaviours, thoughts and ideas, a student may be **out of touch with reality**, when they are unable to state what day it is, or even answer other simple questions such as their name and date of birth.



Developmental Challenges

Most university students will be faced with normal **developmental challenges**, such as formalising their personal identity, establishing boundaries with family members or figuring out their sexuality. Experiencing challenging romantic, friendship or parental relationships is common for this developmental period.



Spiritual / Ancestral Calling

When students have an **ancestral calling**, they experience many emotional, physical and spiritual symptoms. Psychological-like symptoms could include being overly emotional, feeling depressed, having suicidal thoughts, hearing voices and/or having hallucinations. It is thus important to note that sometimes a calling can present as symptoms of a mental health disorder, such as depression, anxiety, bizarre thoughts/behaviours or being out of touch with reality. E.g. a student in a spiritual trance may look like they are exhibiting psychosis. It helps to contact family members to get more information or clarification.

Frequently Asked Questions



Can I book an appointment for a student/ask SCD to contact them? (aka third party referrals)

The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) states that participation in therapy is voluntary and that the client should freely and without undue influence consent to partake in the therapeutic process. Considering this, be aware of not coercing the student into a therapeutic process. Staff can inform the student about SCD services and encourage them to reach out. Phoning/emailing on their behalf goes against the ethical rules set out by the HPCSA. The exception to this rule is when a student is unable to consent to a process, e.g. psychotic student. In which case an ambulance will need to be called out.

Can you confirm if a student has booked an appointment, or tell me how they are doing?

As Mental Health Professionals, we are registered under the HPCSA and the South African Council of Social Service Professions (SACSSP). This means that we must always adhere to strict confidentiality and privacy guidelines. We hold information that is private and sensitive, and cannot divulge any information, without our clients' consent. This includes information related to attending sessions, as well as the content thereof.

Triage System:

How to determine the urgency of a situation

GREEN

These are matters that may cause concern, but are not urgent.

The student is experiencing distress, but is able to function despite these difficulties. The student's distress should be recognised and acknowledged, and possible treatment options should be discussed. This could involve referral to a psychiatrist, psychologist, counsellor, social worker or local mental health service.

ORANGE

Situations that require urgent action / referral soon.

This situation does not involve any immediate threat to life, but requires an active intervention to prevent significant suffering or deterioration in the functioning of the student. This will involve contact with a local mental health service or crisis assessment team, and following up with the student within hours or days.

RED

Immediate action is required.

Is the student severely at risk of harming themselves or others (e.g. acute psychosis or major depression with suicide intent)? This situation is treated as any other emergency and might involve hospitalisation and liaison with a mental healthcare facility.

What to do in situations of concern and urgency

Members of staff who become concerned about a student who appears low in mood, tearful, withdrawn or overly anxious, or who exhibits a deterioration in academic performance, should consider one or more of the following courses of action:

LISTEN



Listen, show support and offer available resource information. You are not required to take on the role of a therapist.

COMMUNICATE



Communicate your concern to the student in a positive tone, pointing out the specific signs you have observed.

ASK



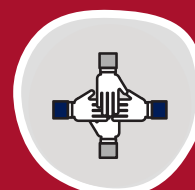
Ask how the student is coping and listen attentively to their response. Open-ended questions directly related to the concern and do not show any judgement.

ALLOW



Allow the student time to tell their story and do not be afraid of silences.

ENCOURAGE



Encourage the student to consider obtaining the necessary support and suggest resources and referrals.

ASSURE



Assure the student that discussions are confidential and will remain so, unless you have good reason to believe them to be a danger to themselves or others.



If signs of a safety risk are present

Ask the student directly if they are considering suicide. If a student is not contemplating suicide, asking about it will not introduce them to the option or 'put ideas in their head'.

EMPHASISE

that the relevant referral support structures have the knowledge, experience and resources to assist them in a more appropriate manner.

PROVIDE

the name, phone number and location of the referral office or accompany the student to the relevant office.

ARRANGE

a follow-up appointment with the student to discuss the outcome.

Counselling is a voluntary service and requires informed consent from the student. If a student does not wish to utilise the support services on offer, their wishes should be respected. Unless the student's situation or condition escalates to an emergency status, no further action is necessary at this stage.

Emergency Situations

In a crisis situation, where a student is highly distressed, an emergency appointment can be made at SCD. This appointment consists of a containment session to evaluate the situation and make the necessary recommendations or referrals.

These circumstances could include the following:

*if a
student...*



is expressing
suicidal
thoughts



is threatening
self-harm



appears to not
be in touch
with reality



is expressing
bizarre behaviour,
ideas and thoughts



appears overly
agitated or
aggressive



In responding to a student in distress, staff should only act to the limit of their competencies. The appropriate course of action depends on the urgency of the situation, your relationship with the student and your level of experience.



What to do in emergency situations

Did the student harm themselves or is threatening to do so?

(In other words - is this a life-threatening situation?)

YES

Call an Ambulance

- Try not to act alone. Seek help from another colleague (if possible).
- Stay calm.
- Identify yourself.
- Provide your contact number (don't give your office number and then leave the office).
- Clearly state the problem (e.g. the student has taken an overdose).
- Give clear instructions regarding the exact location of the emergency.
- Listen carefully to any instructions and write them down, if possible.
- Stay in contact with the emergency staff.
- Don't put the phone down until all relevant information has been given.
- Stay with the student until the ambulance arrives.

In situations where a staff member has become concerned about a student and believes them to be at immediate risk of harm to self or others, one or more of the following listed courses of action should be taken.

Is the student aggressive?

Did the incident occur outside of office hours?

YES

Call Protection Services to assist you.

Did the incident occur while off-campus?

YES

ER24 services also available for off-campus students.

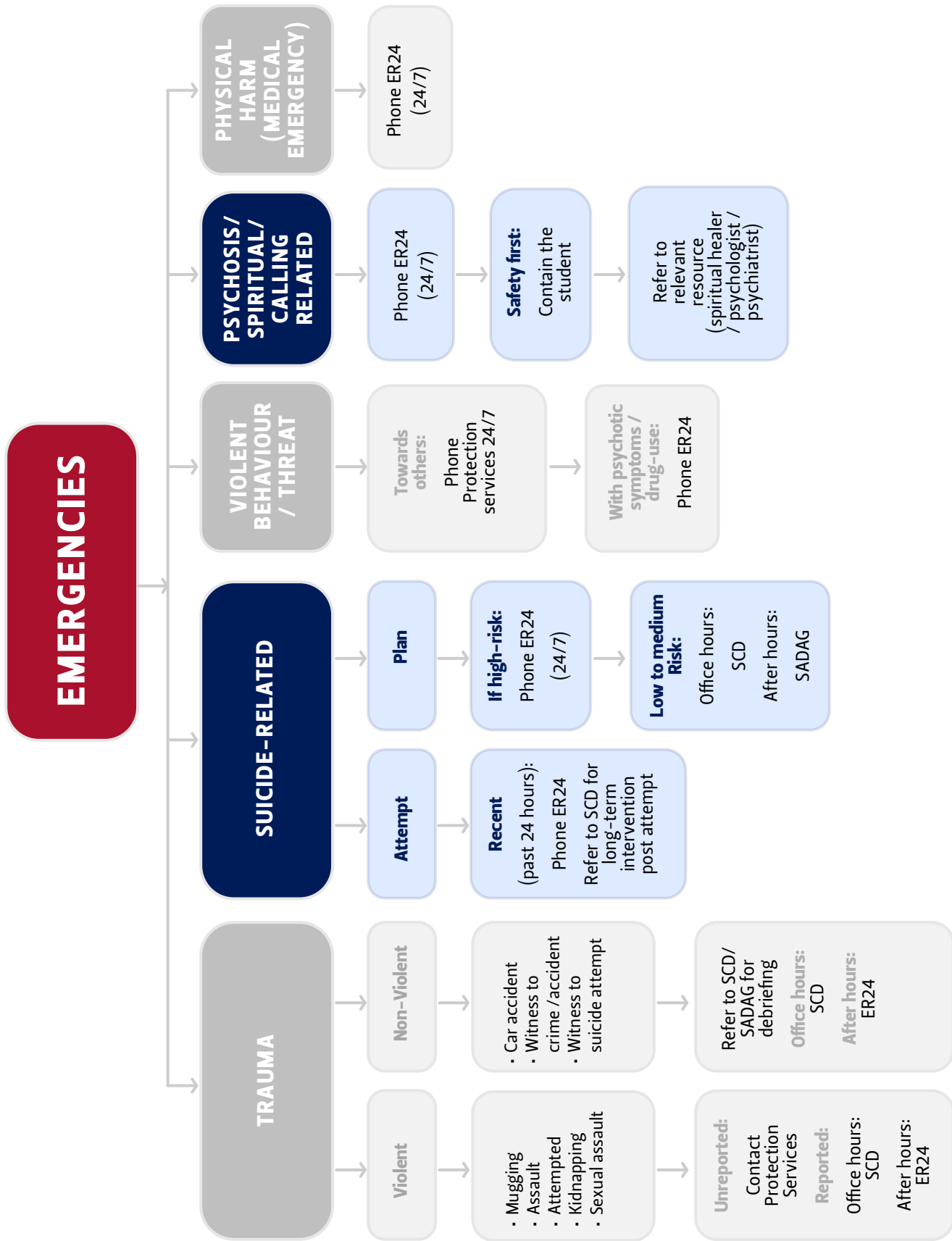
Does the student have an existing therapist/MHP?

YES

Obtain details and contact the relevant practitioner explaining your concerns and requesting immediate help. Accompany the student to the appointment, if possible.

If it is a non-critical emergency within office hours, the student can be taken to the Campus Health Clinic where they will be examined by a physician. Medical aid tariffs / administrative fees are applicable.

Emergency Flowchart

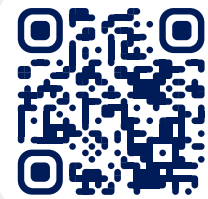


UFS Student Mental Health Support

STUDENT COUNSELLING AND DEVELOPMENT

STEP 1

Access our **online resources** which cover a variety of topics ranging from academic support to psychological wellbeing.



STEP 2

Make use of the 24/7 toll-free dedicated **SADAG UFS Student Careline**

0800 00 6363
SMS 43302
helpline@sadag.org

STEP 3

To schedule an appointment with a Mental Health Professional (MHP), please contact us:

Bloemfontein Campus

051 401 2853
SCD@ufs.ac.za

South Campus

051 505 1989
SCDSouth@ufs.ac.za

Qwaqwa Campus

058 718 5125
SCDQQ@ufs.ac.za



Crisis Intervention Protocol

	SCD	SADAG	ER24
Contact details	051 401 2853 (Bfn) 058 718 5125 (QQ) 051 505 1989 (South)	0800 00 6363	010 205 3057
Time	07:45 – 16:30	24/7	24/7
Services available	Workshops Programmes Therapy Career counselling Crisis intervention	Telephonic counselling Screening Brief interventions Referrals to other departments / resources	Physical assessment Physical counselling Crisis intervention Trauma counselling Debriefing (individual and group) On and off campus
Roles & Responsibilities	Long-term / Continuous interventions	Brief crisis intervention Screening & Referrals	Crisis intervention
Type of intervention	Telephonic Video Face-to-face	Telephonic	Face-to-face (Bfn & South) Telephonic if assessment deems necessary Telephonic (QQ)
Referral sources	Self SADAG & ER24 Broader UFS community (departments / residences etc.)	Self SCD	Self SCD Broader UFS Community (departments / residences etc.)
Triage	GREEN / ORANGE / RED	GREEN / ORANGE	RED

Examples of situations

WHEN A STUDENT...



Experiences a panic attack

Reassure them that they are okay and show them how to breathe through it. Reassure them that the panic attack will not last forever. Ask them if they are receiving support for panic/anxiety.



Is crying / in distress

Listen to them and speak in a calm, caring manner. Ask them if they would like to reach out to a loved one or a mental health professional for support.



Says that they just want to give up

Listen to them and speak in a calm, caring manner. Offer various resources available to them (academic and psychological). Ask them if they would like to reach out to a mental health professional for support.



Expresses feelings of anxiety

Listen and share with them the various resources available to them (academic and psychological).



Has attempted suicide

Call Protection services or the ambulance immediately. Contact the student's emergency contact.

SCD

Developmental, long-term therapeutic processes. Referrals from SADAG & ER24 for ongoing therapy.

SADAG

When student is in distress - they can phone SADAG 24/7. If student phones during night / after hours and is high risk - SADAG will refer to ER24.

ER24

Suicide attempt. Psychotic episode. After emergency situations, such as psychotic episodes or suicide attempts, phone ER24.

Proudly compiled by
Health and Wellness Centre
Student Counselling and Development

Contact us at:
+27 51 401 2853 / +27 58 718 5125 / +27 51 505 1989
scd@ufs.ac.za / scdq@ufs.ac.za / scdsouth@ufs.ac.za