

**Orange Folder Initiative Companion Guide**

The OC Health Care (HCA) has partnered with the Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS) to provide school faculty, staff, teachers, coaches, and parents with tools and resources to support and promote mental health and wellness for K-12 students.

The Orange Folder is a tool to help promote early identification, intervention, and timely access to services for students who may be experiencing mental health challenges. A mental health crisis can be prevented by identifying early signs of distress and linking students to school support services and community resources. The Orange Folder Initiative was designed to be a tool to add to your toolbox of strategies to connect and assist students experiencing trauma or impacted by short- or long-term distress.

District teachers and staff interact regularly with students and are often in a unique position to observe student behaviors, emotions, attitudes, and actions. As educators, knowing the signs of distress will increase your ability to identify these signs of distress when they surface in your student. Remember, you may be the first person to **SEE SOMETHING** since you have regular contact with the students. When students are in distress, **SAY SOMETHING**; have a conversation with your student about your concerns and listen empathetically. This is an opportunity to demonstrate you care about this student and support them during a time of distress. This may include contacting parents/caregivers; linking to school-based counseling services; or connecting them to a person trained to conduct a risk assessment. It is recommended that you check-in with your School Administrator to review your school’s specific referral protocols.

The Orange Folder initiative “Speak Up for Your Student: See Something. Say Something” is created to achieve the following:

* Equip and guide educators to make appropriate response to students in distress
* Increase awareness for educators about the resources on their school campus

The Orange Folder includes customizable protocols and resource pages for educators to quickly guide school staff to intervene with students is distress.

The following are sample resource pages, including guidelines that schools can use to quickly identify resources in their own school community. Refer to the following sample protocols and resource page templates to customize your school district resources.

**Orange Folder Initiative First Page**

**This page helps schools and districts send a message to their staff about the initiative. It can be customized for your school or district in the following ways:**

* + Schools/districts can add their logo
  + School/districts can add the message in the sample template or use a different message outlining their school mental health initiative
  + School/districts can add the signs of distress to train staff to SEE Something
  + Schools/districts can customize and disseminate “sample signs of distress”

**Know the Signs of Distress**

As a member of the educational community, it is important to be aware of the signs and indicators of distress highlighted in the table below. Often, students in distress will have impairment within or across social, emotional, and academic spheres. Look for sudden or erratic changes in behavior and pay attention to the duration and severity of these changes. Traumatic childhood events such as Adverse Childhood Experiences are also a well-documented risk factor for suicidality. These experiences may increase a student’s level of distress while decreasing student’s coping mechanisms and emotional regulation. If you believe a student is experiencing distress, it is imperative to connect with one of your schools' mental health professionals immediately.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Icon  Description automatically generated | **SOCIAL** | Difficulty with peers may include frequent arguments, verbal abuse, verbal threats, badgering, or intimidating; withdrawal from peers and avoidance of social activities; conflicts with friends or family; a recent traumatic event with a friend or in their community; and any social media posts with suicidal or homicidal content. |
|  | **EMOTIONAL** | Problems with emotional regulation may include frequent crying; anxiety, panic reactions, agitation, apathy, depression, or grief; thoughts of despair; self-disclosure about personal distress or worry about family problems; feelings, of hopelessness and helplessness; and unprovoked anger, rage, or hostility; and implied or direct threats to harm self or others. |
|  | **PHYSICAL** | Frequent complaints of headaches and stomachaches; changes in physical appearance, deterioration in grooming, hygiene, or weight loss/gain; fatigue/sleep; intoxication or use of alcohol/marijuana; cuts, bruises, or other injuries; reckless or risky behavior; and implied or direct threats to physically harm self or others. |
|  | **ACADEMIC** | Academic distress may include sudden decline in quality of work and grades; repeated absences/tardiness; real or perceived risk of academic failure; and assignments and artwork with themes of rage, worthlessness, isolation, themes of death, suicide, violence, revenge. |
| Broken Heart with solid fill | **ADVERSE CHILDHOOD**  **EXPERIENCES** | An Adverse Childhood Experience is a negative event that occurs during childhood that potentially damages a child’s sense of safety and stability. Examples of ACE’s: abuse which can be emotional, physical, or sexual; neglect; domestic violence; substance abuse or misuse; mental illness of a member of the household; having a member of the household go to prison; a rejection for an LGBTQ + student; racism; discrimination; or community violence. |

**Orange Folder Initiative Second Page:**

**This page is intended for schools and districts to include the following:**

* + District information about school mental health
  + District mission and vision about school mental health
  + School roles and contact information
  + School district’s referral process
  + School can add the message in the sample template or use a different message outlining their school mental health initiative
  + Schools can add the roles on campus or who to contact

**Roles and Responsibilities (Scope of Work) Supporting**

**School-based Mental Health and Wellness**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| School Mental Health and Wellness Staff | Potential Roles/Responsibility |
| Educators/Classroom Support Staff | * Maintain calm and supportive connection with students individually and as a group * Follow the SEE Something and SAY Something process and refer student for support to the School Mental Health Team when signs of distress have been identified * ***IF IT IS AN EMERGENCY, WALK THE STUDENT TO SUPPORT IMMEDIATELY OR TALK TO MH PROFESSIONAL TO COME TO STUDENT*** |
| School-Based Mental Health Providers   * School Counselor * School Psychologist * School Social Worker | * Conduct Risk Assessment * Create a safety plan * Contact OC Links for resources including the Crisis Assessment Team (CAT) for follow up when needed * Contact parent/guardian, if appropriate * Complete Release of Information * Input data into Student Information System in a confidential manner * Contact law enforcement/SRO if applicable or warranted * District to add additional possible roles |
| Principal or Administrator | * Support the classroom teacher and staff * Support the school-based mental health team * Support follow-through of the coordinated safety plan for student * District to add additional possible roles |
| School Resource Officer or Law Enforcement Partner | * Enhance school safety * Consult with school-based mental health team on risk and threat management * District to add additional possible roles |

**Sample Roster**

**School-based Mental Health and Wellness Contact Roster**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Phone** | **Email** |
| **Student Services Department** |  |  |
| **School Resource Officer** |  |  |
| **Wellness Center** |  |  |
| **Site Principal/Administrator** |  |  |
| **School Resource Officer** |  |  |
| **School Social Worker** |  |  |
| **School Psychologist** |  |  |
| **School Counselor** |  |  |
| **School Nurse** |  |  |
| **Family/Community Liaison** |  |  |
| **Other Contacts** |  |  |

**Orange Folder Initiative Third Page:**

**This page is intended for schools, districts to:**

* + Customize their internal and external resources

**Additional sample resources can include:**

* + [Orange County Student Mental Health Resource Directory](https://ocstudentmentalhealth.org/resource/resources-for-orange-county-educators-to-support-lgbtq-youth/)
  + [Resources for Teachers, Parents, Families, Friends, & Allies of LGBTQ Youth](https://ocstudentmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/OC-LGBTQ-Resources.pdf)
  + [Resources for Orange County Educators to Support LGBTQ Youth](https://ocstudentmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/OC-LGBTQ-Resources-for-Educators.pdf)
  + [Student Mental Wellness Positive Self-Talk Coping Cards](https://ocstudentmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/OC-SMH-Coping-Cards.pdf)
  + [Tip Sheet for Families: Youth Suicide & Mental Health Concerns During Covid-19](https://ocstudentmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/OC-Suicide-Prevention-Resources.pdf)
  + [Orange County Crisis Resources (local, state, & national)](https://ocstudentmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/OC-Crisis-Resources.pdf)
  + [The Other Rs in Education: Reconnecting, Reclaiming, & Reintegrating in Educational Spaces](https://ocstudentmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/OC-Crisis-Resources.pdf)
  + [School-based Suicide Prevention Campaigns Step-by-Step Resource Guide](https://ocstudentmentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/OC-School-Based-Prevention-Campaign.pdf)

**Orange Folder Initiative Fourth Page:**

**This page is intended for schools, districts to:**

* + Outline the process when a staff member identifies a student in distress.
  + Support Educators in finding the words to SAY:

**Sample: Find the Words to Say**

**Teacher-Student Communication: When Should I Talk to a Student?**

* When you feel concerned for a student and would like to check-in with them to demonstrate your concern and assist them with connecting to supports.
* When you **SEE something** that suggests an underlying mental health concern, situational crisis, stress, or a combination of factors. Your conversation with the student can make a difference.
* If you **SAY something,** be sure to validate and listen carefully- this will make the student more comfortable seeking assistance.
* Before starting a conversation with a student of concern, be sure to have resources on hand, especially the contact information for the district/school staff member who is **trained to conduct a complete risk assessment.**
* The conversation should just be a check-in; educators should not ask any deep and prying questions. If sensitive and potentially harmful information is divulged by student, an immediate “walk and talk” referral must be made.

♥♥♥Reminder: If you feel uncomfortable about checking-in with a student but have concerns around their level of distress- REFER THEM TO THE SCHOOL MH PROVIDER IMMEDIATELY♥♥♥

**Teacher-Student Communication: How do I talk to a student? What do I say?**

* Talking openly and honestly about mental health lets students know that you support and care about them. Finding the words to start a conversation can be anxiety producing; staying calm and clear and connecting with students will be helpful,
* How you say these words may be even more important than your exact words. Speak in a calm, compassionate tone and maintain eye contact. Your body language can also communicate sincere interest.
* Remember to start the conversation with age-appropriate language. You don’t need to know the perfect thing to say – show that you are open and willing to talk; this will demonstrate that you care and want to help.
  + **Here are a few suggestions that can be modified to fit the circumstances and developmental level of the student.**
    - ***“It seems like you are going through a difficult time. I want you to know you’re not alone in this and there are resources here at school and in the community to help.”***
    - ***“You look really tired all the time, and I noticed you were crying before class. I am someone who cares and wants to listen. We also have school counselors and school social workers I can refer you to. I can walk over with you if you’d like.”***
    - ***“I have noticed you’ve made some statements in class about feeling hopeless and that things are never going to get better, and no one cares. I really care about you, and I was wondering what is happening in your life that makes you feel this way.”***
* **Mention the signs that prompted you to ask about the student’s distress or your concern about suicide**. This makes it clear that you are not asking "out of the blue," and makes it more difficult for the person to deny that something is bothering them.
  + - ***“One of your classmates shared with me your dad recently died and you told her you wished you were dead too. Are you thinking of ending your life? We have a counselor on campus who you can talk with.”***
* **Ask directly about suicide.** It is safe: talking about suicide does NOT put the idea in someone's thoughts. Instead, they will feel some relief that someone has noticed that they need help and will assist them. Asking directly and using the word "suicide" establishes that you and the person at risk are talking about the same thing and lets the person know that you are willing to talk about suicide.
  + - ***“I read your assignment and I am concerned about what you wrote about wishing you were dead. Are you thinking about suicide?”***
    - ***“Have you had thoughts about ending your life?”***
* **Don’t promise secrecy.** The student may say that they don’t want you to tell anyone that they are suicidal. You may be concerned that they will be upset with you, but when someone’s life is at risk, it is more important to ensure their safety.

**MOST IMPORTANTLY- NEVER LEAVE STUDENT ALONE!!**

If they answer "yes" to your direct question about suicide, stay calm, seek immediate assistance by calling a school mental health provider who is trained to conduct a risk assessment, or contact an administrator. Do not ever leave the student alone while you are seeking help. Talk with someone while you sit with the student or have them walk with you to the identified location for help when necessary.

**Additional Sample Words to Say**

**Building Awareness and Effective Communication for Educators**:

These sensitive conversations can activate certain emotions, such as anxiety, nervousness, or stress. These are some helpful tips for you:

Tips Instead of… Try…\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Check your **EMOTIONS** Jack has been very disrespectful Jack seems frustrated during

To me on several occasions. some of our class activities.

Consult with a **PEER** I have to do this alone… If I am nervous, it’s okay, I can

consult with a colleague, school mental health lead, or administrator.

Talk to the **STUDENT** I’d like to tell you some things Would it be okay to talk about

I’ve been seeing… one or two more things I’m

seeing, to help you get a better

picture?

Debrief with a **PEER** Wow! Jack is really in a hard I have so many resources…or

place right now. Who can I call for support?

I wish I can do more!

*(Adapted from Say This Not That, Each Mind Matters)*

