

Mental Health Warning Signs and Ways to Help

A quick guide for Birmingham area students. You do not need to figure out a diagnosis to check on someone. Notice a change, start a conversation, and bring in a trusted adult when safety is a concern.

Changes worth checking on

- Pulling away from friends, activities, or school for days or weeks.
- Major changes in sleep, mood, grades, energy, or usual behavior.
- More alcohol or other drug use, especially to cope with difficult feelings.
- Statements such as "Nothing matters," "I am a burden," or "People would be better off without me."
- Saying goodbye unexpectedly or giving away things that matter to them.

A change matters even more when it is new, getting stronger, or follows a loss or painful event. These signs can have many causes. Checking in is a caring first step.

Signs that call for help now

- Someone says they want to die, talks about suicide, or sends a message that makes you fear for their safety.
- Someone has taken an unknown substance, cannot be awakened, or has trouble breathing.
- Someone is in immediate danger or you cannot tell whether they are safe.

Tell a nearby trusted adult right away. Call or text 988 for a mental health or substance use crisis. Call 911 for immediate life-threatening danger or a medical emergency.

Words you can use

- "I have noticed you seem different lately. What has been going on?"
- "I am here to listen. We can find an adult who can help us."
- If you worry about suicide: "Are you thinking about suicide?"

If someone asks you to keep a safety concern secret, say: "I care about you too much to keep this to myself. Let us get help together." Stay connected while you involve an adult or crisis counselor.

Where to Get Help in Birmingham

Save a number now, before you need it. A school counselor, parent or caregiver, teacher, coach, or another trusted adult can help you take the first step.

Resource	How to reach it	When to use it
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	Call or text 988	Support for emotional distress, suicidal thoughts, or a substance use crisis. Available 24/7.
Youth Talk Line	Call or text 205-328-5465	For ages 6-18. During the school year, available daily from 3:00-10:00 PM.
Crisis Center local line	Call 205-323-7777	Local crisis and suicide support, 24/7.
Recovery Resource Center	Call 205-458-3377	Help finding substance use information, assessment, and treatment resources.
Emergency services	Call 911	Immediate life-threatening danger or a medical emergency, including a possible overdose.

If you are worried about substance use

Start with concern instead of blame: "I have noticed you seem overwhelmed. Can we talk to someone together?" A pill prescribed to someone else is not safe to share. If a person is hard to wake or has trouble breathing, call 911 and tell an adult immediately.

My support plan

One adult I can speak with: _____

A place I can go at school for help: _____

You can use these numbers for yourself or for someone you care about. If a friend shares an urgent concern, involve an adult right away rather than trying to carry it alone.

Sources: Crisis Center Youth Talk and 988 pages; Crisis Center Recovery Resource Center; Alabama Department of Mental Health; NIMH 5 Action Steps; 988 Lifeline Warning Signs. Checked September 24, 2026.