



California Community Colleges



Beyond the Breaking Point: Supporting Students Through Distress and Crisis Part II: Applying the Approach

Presenter: Monique Mendoza, PhD

March 24, 2026 | 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm PST

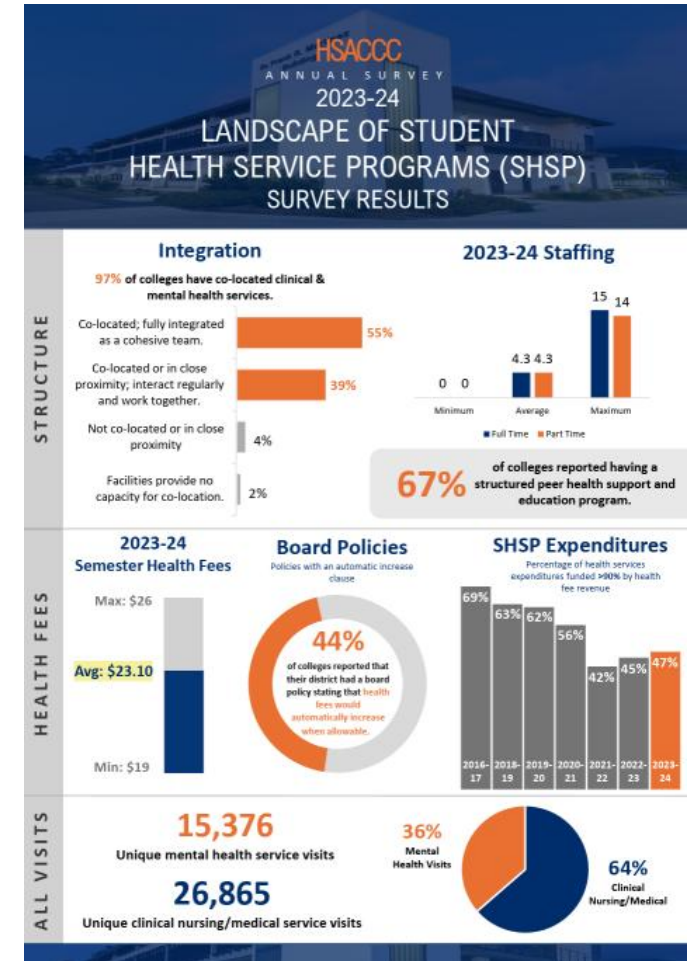
Let's start
connecting...



**Add your name, title/role,
and college in the chat.**
What brings you to today's session?

Health Services Association California Community College (HSACCC) Survey

- Survey in collaboration with the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO)
- **Survey results have been used to:**
 - Inform HSACCC members annually of program/service trends
 - Advocate for student health fee increases
 - Enhance community college health research
- Check with your Student Health Services Program office and remind them that the survey **deadline is Tuesday, March 31**
- **Survey link:**
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHKZP2D>



<https://hsaccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/HSACCC-2023-24-Infographic.pdf>

Beyond the Breaking Point Series and Resources



California Community Colleges
HEALTH & WELLNESS



Presented by:
Monique Mendoza, PhD

Dr. Monique Mendoza, a licensed psychologist, specializes in high-risk settings and workplace violence prevention. She provides consulting services to help campuses prioritize well-being through inclusive, confidence-building strategies. Dr. Mendoza holds a B.A. in Cognitive Science from UC Irvine and a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Missouri.

- Part 1: Foundation
- Part 2: Apply the Approach
- Recordings
- Slide Deck
- Learning Captures
- **Coming Soon! Toolkit**



Scan to watch recordings

https://bit.ly/BeyondtheBreakingPoint_Part1



Center for Applied
Research Solutions

Logistics



Chat and Q&A: Please utilize the chat or Q&A function to ask questions throughout.



Closed Captioning (CC): Closed captions are available. Click on the (CC) button to read live captions.



Meeting Materials: Slides and any follow up materials will be provided following the presentation.



Recording: We are recording today's session, and the recording will be made available on the website in the coming weeks.

Today's Facilitator: Monique Mendoza, PhD



- Former Director of Behavioral Intervention Teams across multiple sectors including Higher Education, healthcare, and government
- Subject matter expert in Threat Management and Workplace Violence Prevention
- Licensed Psychologist in California for 14 years
- Organizational Consultant focused on building threat management teams and institutionalizing safe initiatives

We Heard From You

You asked	What this tells us	Where we go today
When do I call public safety?	How do I know when I've reached my limit?	Escalation decision-making
How do I make the handoff without losing the student?	How do I stay connected through the transition?	Warm handoff in practice
How do I report without backing a student into a corner?	How do I hold institutional obligation and trust at the same time?	Navigating the reporting moment

Learning Objectives



Identify when a situation requires escalation and take the next step with clarity.

Execute a warm handoff that keeps the student engaged in the process.

Navigate a reporting transition in a way that maintains the student's trust and dignity.

Apply a follow-up approach that continues the relationship beyond the immediate crisis phase.

In the last two weeks, have you had a situation with a distressed student that felt unresolved or more difficult than expected?



<https://www.menti.com/alqcnrhnzr6>

Distress Tolerance

The ***perceived capacity*** and the ***behavioral act*** to withstand negative emotional and/or other aversive states elicited by some type of stressor.

(Zvolensky et al., 2010)

Where Part 1 Left Us

Recognition

You can recognize distress. Today we practice what happens next.

Language

You have language for the conversation. Today we work through the harder moments in it.

Referral

You know what a referral is. Today we make it connect.

Kenny (24 years old)

Two
Campuses

Young
daughter

Aging
parents

Part-time
job

Hours just
cut

Today he stood up in class and said:

"This campus is the worst. They just don't care about anyone. The whole system is broken."

- A referral is sent to you.
- Kenny has not been to his other classes this week.
- He told a classmate he was thinking about dropping everything.
- He looked fine yesterday but seemed flat and distant today.

At this point, who is the most appropriate person to reach out to Kenny?

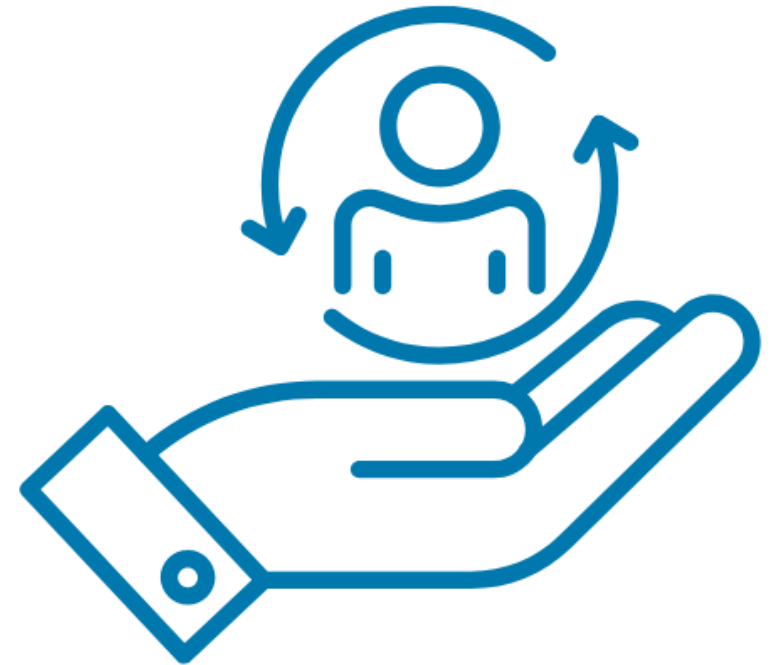


<https://www.menti.com/alqcnrhnzr6>

De-escalation Offer

Three things that work in the moment:

1. Lower your own physiological response first. ***The student reads your body before your words.***
2. Name what you observe, not what you interpret. ***“I can see this is really frustrating,” not “You seem angry.”***
3. Give them somewhere to address their concern. ***An invitation to step out is not a punishment. Frame it as care.***



Kenny (24 years old)

Two
Campuses

Young
daughter

Aging
parents

Part-time
job

Hours just
cut

Today he stood up in class and said:

"This campus is the worst. They just don't care about anyone. The whole system is broken."

- A referral is sent to you.
- Kenny has not been to his other classes this week.
- He told a classmate he was thinking about dropping everything.
- He looked fine yesterday but seemed flat and distant today.

At this point, does
this situation
require public
safety
involvement?



<https://www.menti.com/alqcnrhnzr6>

Kenny

You connect with Kenny after class.

He is calmer.

He tells you he just needed to say something out loud.

He does not want to talk to a counselor because "***they just put you on a waitlist and you never hear back.***"

He starts to leave.

What is the
biggest roadblock
to making the
warm handoff
right now?



<https://www.menti.com/alqcnnrhnr6>

Making the Link to Support with Urgency and Care

Name your concern

What you're describing worries me.

I'm concerned about what you've shared, and I want to make sure you have support.

Make the connection

Let's talk about connecting with the counseling center or another resource.

Give them the next step

I can walk you over or we can call together right now.

Name why it matters

This isn't something you have to figure out alone.

Close with appreciation

Thank you for trusting me with these concerns.

New Message



To | Sana Garcia - Pathway Resource Center

March 14 2026, 8:15 PM

Cc Bcc

Subject Re: Stop by next week's study sesh!

Hi Sana,

As you know, I've been trying to complete my capstone project this semester. I also didn't turn in the analysis paper that was due yesterday. I've been trying to work on it, but I just can't focus on anything right now and it's not like me. I've shared with you a little about how I've been taking care of my sister's health. Now, everything feels pointless. I keep thinking about how I'm probably going to fail this class anyway, and maybe I'm not cut out for college at all.

I just can't keep on track. When will this all end?

Now, I'm worried about Spring Finals that start next month. Do you really think the study session is even for someone like me when I'm so far behind? I'm buried in work and I'll probably be the most helpless student there.

Thanks tho.

Lily

What does this email tell you about Lily's relationship with reaching out for help?



<https://www.menti.com/alqcnnrhnr6>

Version A

New Message



To | Sana Garcia

Cc Bcc

Subject Re: Stop by next week

Hi Lily,

It's great to hear from you. I appreciate you reaching to me. I want to reassure you that every student's journey is their own pace. I believe you can still complete this capstone and pass the class. There are still options to connect/reach out. Let's make a game plan for next steps.

I hope to hear from you again soon.

~ Sana

Version B

New Message



To | Sana Garcia

Cc Bcc +

Subject Re: Stop by next week

Hi Lily,

Thank you for reaching out. Your academic success and personal wellness are incredibly important to us. We understand that as the semester closes, it can be a stressful time for many students.

You've made it so far on this capstone project. I would love to help you through this to get you to your degree.

I'm glad to introduce you to Jane who will be reaching out to provide you to further resources.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns. I'll also check in again on Monday.

~ Sana

Which response
keeps Lily
engaged with
support
resources?



<https://www.menti.com/alqcnrhnzr6>

Lily (cont.)

- **Sana follows up one week later as promised.**
- **No response.**
- **Jane reports that Lily opened the email but did not reply.**
- **It has now been two weeks since the original message.**

What is the
appropriate next
step?



<https://www.menti.com/alqcnrhnzr6>



Lily responds 5 weeks later!

***I got Jane's message. I wasn't ready before.
Is it too late?***

In the chat name a specific next step.

Continuing the Connection

What feels difficult in the moment	What you are accomplishing
Not knowing the right words	Staying present long enough for the student to find theirs
Making the referral	Keeping the student connected to resources and communication channels
Following up when there is no response	Communicating that the relationship outlasts the crisis
Debriefing it after the student leaves	Protecting your capacity to show up again

Build your connection plan before you need it

Campus Health Center

Hours, location, intake process, wait times

Student Resources/Peer Support

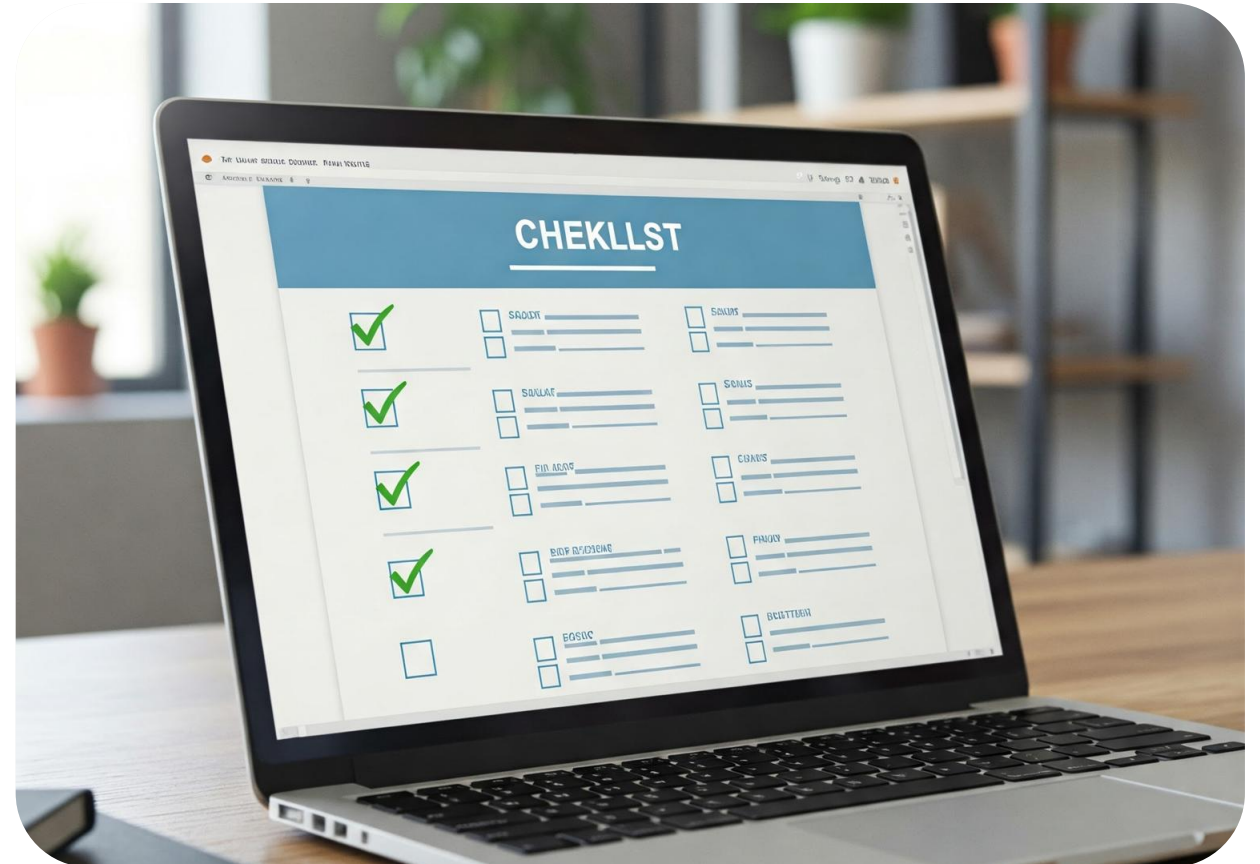
Opportunities to reduce loneliness and increase connection.

Trusted Resources

Who have I agreed to contact

Community Crisis Resources and Hotlines

With a reminder of how to access these resources.



Key Takeaways

For Yourself

The discomfort you feel in these moments is information, not failure.

For Your Colleagues

The warm handoff only works if someone is on the other end. Build that relationship before you need it.

For Your Students

They remember that you stayed. Not what you said. That you stayed.

*Power
OF
Words*

References & Resources

References

- **Liu, C. H., Stevens, C., Wong, S. H., Yasui, M., & Chen, J. A. (2019).** The prevalence and predictors of mental health diagnoses and suicidal behavior in college students: Implications for addressing disparities in service use. *Depression and Anxiety*, 36(1), 8–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/da.22830>
- **KFF. (2025).** *Suicide deaths: National trends and variation by demographics and states.*
<https://www.kff.org/mental-health/suicide-deaths-national-trends-and-variation-by-demographics-and-states/>
- **The Trevor Project. (2024).** *2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People.*
<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024/>
- [Distress Tolerance: Theory, Measurement, and Relations to Psychopathology.](#)
- [American College Health Association. \(2025\). American College Health Association–National College Health Assessment III: Undergraduate Student Reference Group Executive Summary, Spring 2025. Silver Spring, MD: ACHA.](#)
- [Active Minds. \(2024\). Loneliness, Resilience, and Mental Health.](#)

References & Resources

Resources

- Fassbinder, E., Schweiger, U., Martius, D., Brand-de Wilde, O., & Arntz, A. (2016). Emotion regulation in schema therapy and dialectical behavior therapy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 1373. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01373>
- ICCTAC. (n.d.). *Helping students in distress: A practical guide for faculty and staff*. <https://icctac.org/helping-students-in-distress-a-practical-guide-for-faculty-and-staff/>
- Loyola University Maryland Counseling Center. (n.d.). *Supporting students in emotional distress*. <https://www.loyola.edu/departments/counseling-center/services/supporting-students-emotional-distress.html>
- New Harbinger Publications. (n.d.). *Dialectical behavior therapy for college students*. <https://www.newharbinger.com/blog/professional/dialectical-behavior-therapy-for-college-students/>
- Suffolk DBT Center. (n.d.). *How DBT can help you manage the stress of returning to college*. <https://suffolksdbtjl.com/how-dbt-can-help-you-manage-the-stress-of-returning-to-college/>
- The Dorm. (n.d.). *Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) for young adults in college*. <https://thedorm.com/blog/dialectical-behavior-therapy-dbt-young-adults-college/>
- Building Cultural Responsiveness in Mobile Crisis Teams Series - S5: Children, Youth, and Families. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYtFrUB0u3w>

Beyond the Breaking Point Series and Resources



California Community Colleges
HEALTH & WELLNESS



Presented by:
Monique Mendoza, PhD

Dr. Monique Mendoza, a licensed psychologist, specializes in high-risk settings and workplace violence prevention. She provides consulting services to help campuses prioritize well-being through inclusive, confidence-building strategies. Dr. Mendoza holds a B.A. in Cognitive Science from UC Irvine and a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Missouri.

- Part 1: Foundation
- Part 2: Apply the Approach
- Recordings
- Slide Deck
- Learning Captures
- **Coming Soon! Toolkit**



Scan to watch recordings

https://bit.ly/BeyondtheBreakingPoint_Part1



Center for Applied
Research Solutions

Mental Health Action Week

May 5 - 7, 2026

California
Community
Colleges



**HEALTH &
WELLNESS**



SCAN ME TO LEARN MORE

bit.ly/2026MentalHealthActionWeek



New Website + Archived Recordings

- **What Works for Improving Mental Health in Higher Education?** ([Brief](#))
- **Listening to Learners 2023: Increasing Belonging on Campus** ([Report](#))
- **Trauma-Informed Guiding Principles for Working With Transition Age Youth: Provider Fact Sheet** ([Fact Sheet](#))



We'd Love Your Feedback

Your voice helps shape future trainings, tools, and support.

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey.

Thank you for being part of this work—we truly value your input.

Link: <https://cars.jotform.com/260726520155048>



California Community Colleges

Thank you!

For any questions or concerns related to the content of these webinars, please email cccsmh@cars-rp.org

www.cccco.edu