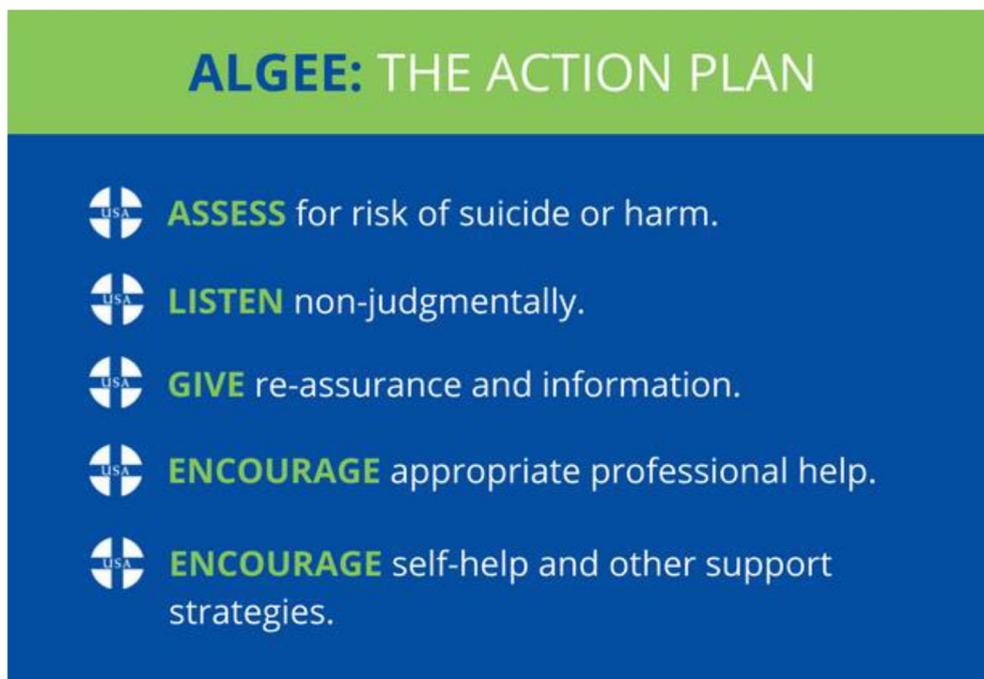


## Confidentiality Guidelines – Mental Health Matters

### At the first indication of a confidence to be shared

If you are approached to support a colleague with a mental health issue, you must be aware of their need for confidentiality, and recognise when it is appropriate to break confidence.

Most cases will require that your conversation remains confidential and there will be no reasonable expectation that you will share anything from your conversation. Refer to your Mental Health Training to ensure you follow the appropriate support process:



### When you have a conversation with someone about their personal concerns, you must:

- Explain to them that you are there to listen, you cannot give advice, but you can signpost them to appropriate resources
- Assure them of confidentiality of the discussion

You must **NOT** discuss any information that is shared with another team member or friend

- You may, with their consent, contact a family member and/or their manager/HR
- You may, if there is real concern, raise awareness of an issue with a professional

You may wish to keep a written record for your own purposes, but this must be kept securely and in accordance with Data Protection regulations.

*There is no rule that says a professional cannot listen to your concerns as a colleague, friend or relative. The General Medical Council (GMC) make guidelines for doctors. The guidelines state that doctors should not refuse to listen to a carer, friend or relative's concerns because of confidentiality. This is because the information could help with their colleague's care.<sup>1</sup>*

### **What are the exceptions that mean you might break confidence?**

- When there is risk to the individual – e.g. you are concerned that they may come to harm
- Where there is risk to others – e.g. you are concerned that they may be likely to cause harm to others (whether intentionally or unintentionally)
- Where there is serious reason to believe they are in a crisis which could escalate in a short space of time (e.g. that day)
- Where there is an indication that criminal activity has taken place either by the person, or by persons known to the person, particularly where there is risk to others

### **In the case of the above, these are the steps you should take:**

- Inform the individual that you are concerned for their wellbeing and will be contacting a professional/their family member
- Inform HR only and ask them to make the relevant specialist support referral (e.g. doctor, relative, etc)
- Remain with the individual to ensure their safety but only if there is no risk to your own (see above)

### **If I don't know what to do**

If you are unsure as to what protocol should be followed, consult HR who will be able to advise. You will need to let the individual know that you are asking for additional support.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/carers-hub/confidentiality-and-information-sharing-for-carers-friends-and-family/>