

TEN QUESTIONS ABOUT DISTRESS

Suggestions of Questions to Ask when Advising about Distressing Situations and a Person in Distress

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These are ten questions for an advisor or consulting health professional to ask regarding a person in distress or who is engaging in behavior that is unusual or is causing distress. These are questions to ask before initiating a specific problem solving and intervention planning process. When it is clear this person and others are safe, then the questions below are not in order of priority. More details about intervention planning and questions to ask are in other CAIS handouts available on the Improving MI Practices website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>

1. What is this person's behavior or the evidence of their distress? (Describe the evidence or behavior in detail including frequency, location, timing, and duration of occurrence.)
2. Who is concerned about the distress or behavior and why? How concerned are they?
3. Is this person (who is in distress or whose behavior is distressing) safe? Are all other people safe? Is this person's or others' property or possessions safe?
4. Is this person uncomfortable, in pain, or in emotional distress?
5. What diagnoses does this person have?
6. What is the functioning level of this person (for example how well can they understand, communicate, and perform tasks)?
7. If there is evidence of dementia, is this person's distress, behavior, and functioning level consistent with a particular stage of a typical Alzheimer's progression? (Look for "out of order" symptoms to discern if there is evidence of a disorder other than Alzheimer's Disease, such as Dementia with Lewy Bodies, or if there is another disorder, such as an infection in addition to or instead of dementia.)
8. What is the history of this person? Is there evidence of substance use or psychiatric symptoms historically or currently?
9. Who has the power to make decisions?
10. What resources are available?