



Back on the Roster

A PATHWAYS CASE STUDY

Student Distress • Academic Collapse • Faculty Burden • Support Avoidance
Housing Instability • Crisis Disclosure • Re-Entry Planning • Care Team Response

CASE SUMMARY

Maya Renner is a 23-year-old student at North Valley College who has enrolled and withdrawn from classes several times over the past three semesters. Each semester begins with cautious optimism. Maya attends the first few class meetings, introduces herself to faculty, and says she is “trying again because school is the only thing that makes life feel like it might move forward.”

Maya’s prior Care Team history includes reports related to unstable housing, difficulty managing medication, inconsistent class attendance, missed assignments, and repeated withdrawal from courses. She has been offered counseling referrals, case management, disability/accessibility services, academic advising, emergency aid screening, community housing referrals, and help communicating with instructors. However, Maya rarely follows through with the offices best positioned to help. She misses counseling intakes, does not return calls from the case manager, and often disengages from advisors after one or two emails.

This semester, Maya is enrolled in two courses: English Composition with Professor Dana Whitcomb and Introduction to Psychology with Dr. Luis Moreno. Before the semester begins, Professor Whitcomb notices Maya’s name on the roster and contacts the Care Team. She taught Maya the previous year and remembers receiving several late-night emails describing panic, housing instability, medication confusion, and feeling “too tired to keep explaining.” Professor Whitcomb says, “I want to be supportive, but I can’t be the person she turns to every time everything falls apart.”

During the first two weeks, Maya attends class but appears exhausted. She sometimes puts her head down during lectures and tells Professor Whitcomb she has been sleeping on a friend’s couch or in her car, depending on the week. She says she is trying to restart medication but has missed appointments and is unsure whether she can afford consistent transportation to the clinic. When Professor Whitcomb encourages her to respond to the Care Team, Maya says, “They always send me somewhere else. I’m tired of being handed off.”

By week four, Maya stops submitting regular assignments. In English Composition, she submits a personal essay describing “living in a loop,” “wanting everything to pause,” and “being visible only when I scare people.” The essay does not include a direct suicide threat or a plan, but Professor Whitcomb submits a Care Team report because the tone is concerning and similar to prior semesters. In Psychology, Dr. Moreno receives a reflection paper in which Maya writes that medication makes her feel “foggy,” that stopping it makes her feel “too awake,” and that she sometimes cannot tell whether

people are annoyed with her or secretly talking about her. Dr. Moreno is unsure whether this reflects metaphor, anxiety, medication disruption, emerging paranoia, or something else.

The Care Team assigns Elena Park, a student support case manager, as Maya's primary contact. Elena sends a warm outreach email and offers a short meeting to discuss housing, medication continuity, academic options, and support planning. Maya replies once, saying, "I already told everyone what's wrong. I don't need another meeting where people pretend to help." She does not attend the scheduled appointment.

Faculty concern increases. Professor Whitcomb submits two additional reports after Maya misses class and sends another late-night email saying, "I disappear every semester and everyone acts surprised." Dr. Moreno asks whether he is required to keep accepting written work that appears to function more like a crisis disclosure than coursework. Both faculty members want to help, but they also feel pulled into a role they are not trained or resourced to fill.

By week seven, Maya stops attending both classes. She has not responded to Elena, counseling, or advising. She sends Professor Whitcomb one final message: "I knew I shouldn't have come back. I'm done trying to make this place understand." Maya then withdraws from both courses without meeting with advising. The Care Team closes the active case after documenting outreach attempts, missed appointments, offered resources, faculty concerns, and a recommendation for a structured re-entry plan if Maya attempts to enroll again.

The following semester, Maya appears on another course roster. Before classes begin, the new instructor contacts the department chair and asks, "Is there anything I should know? I've heard this student has a history." The Care Team must now decide how to support Maya's autonomy and access to education while also preparing faculty, limiting repeated crisis exposure, and avoiding a cycle in which classroom instructors become the primary crisis-response system.

KEY TEAM CHALLENGE

How should an institution respond when a student repeatedly re-enrolls, presents with significant distress, avoids direct support, uses faculty and coursework as the primary outlet for crisis disclosure, and then withdraws or disappears?

A strong response is not to block re-enrollment simply because the student has needs. The issue is not that Maya has housing, medication, mental health, or academic challenges. The issue is the repeated cycle of enrollment, distress disclosure, faculty alarm, support avoidance, academic non-completion, withdrawal, and re-enrollment without a stronger plan.

The institution's task is to create a structured re-entry and support framework that protects access while clarifying expectations.

TIMELINE

PHASE 1: PRIOR PATTERN

- **What Happens:** Maya has repeated semesters of distress, missed work, withdrawal, and non-engagement with support.
- **Team Challenge:** Avoid treating each semester as a brand-new case with no history.

PHASE 2: PRE-SEMESTER CONCERN

- **What Happens:** Professor Whitcomb sees Maya on the roster and contacts the Care Team before classes begin.
- **Team Challenge:** Support faculty without stigmatizing Maya or disclosing unnecessary private information.

PHASE 3: EARLY ENGAGEMENT

- **What Happens:** Maya attends class but appears exhausted and reports unstable housing and medication disruption.
- **Team Challenge:** Offer support early before academic collapse begins.

PHASE 4: CONCERNING COURSEWORK

- **What Happens:** Maya submits essays describing distress, disappearance, and being visible only when alarming others.
- **Team Challenge:** Decide whether this is an academic expression, a crisis disclosure, a mandated report, or all three.

PHASE 5: AVOIDANCE OF DIRECT SUPPORT

- **What Happens:** Maya ignores or rejects outreach from Elena, counseling, and advising.
- **Team Challenge:** Keep the door open while documenting refusal and clarifying consequences.

PHASE 6: FACULTY BURDEN

- **What Happens:** Faculty become the primary audience for distress and feel responsible.
- **Team Challenge:** Redirect support to trained helpers and give faculty role-limited scripts.

PHASE 7: WITHDRAWAL/DISAPPEARANCE

- **What Happens:** Maya stops attending and withdraws without advising.
- **Team Challenge:** Document, close appropriately, and plan for future re-entry.

PHASE 8: FUTURE ENROLLMENT

- **What Happens:** Maya appears on another roster.
- **Team Challenge:** Build a proactive, privacy-conscious re-entry structure.

PATHWAYS FACTOR MAP

Pathways Factor	Score	Indicators Present in Case
Suicide	1	Wanting everything to “pause,” “too tired to keep explaining.”
Depression	2	Exhausted, discouraged, repeatedly withdraws, disengages from help, and writes about being trapped in a loop.
Self-Injury	0	None reported
Alcohol/THC	0	None reported
Serious Drug Use	0	None reported
Being Teased	0	None reported
Social Problems	1	Relies on faculty for crisis disclosure; avoids support staff.
Academic Trouble	3	Stops submitting work, concerning assignments, withdrawal.
Financial Insecurity	2	Unstable housing and transportation barriers.
Adjusting to Change	1	Re-enrollment appears to restart a destabilizing cycle.
Loss or Bereavement	0	None reported
Being Stalked	0	None reported
Anxiety	2	Panic, late-night distress, difficulty attending, and concern that others may be annoyed with or talking about her.
Intense Thoughts/Actions	1	Repetitive crisis themes and a rigid belief that the institution only responds when alarmed.
Hallucinations/Delusions	1	Sometimes cannot tell whether people are secretly talking about her.
Group Pressure	0	None reported
Vandalism	0	None reported
Being Controlled	0	None reported
Harassing Behaviors	0	None reported
Stalking Others	0	None reported
Acts of Partner Violence	0	None reported
Sexual Violence	0	None reported
Incel Behavior	0	None reported
Eating/Sleeping	2	Appears exhausted, unstable sleeping conditions.
Affective Violence	0	None reported
Trolling Actions	0	None reported
Transient Threats	0	None reported
Substantive Threats	0	None reported
White Supremacy	0	None reported
Weapons Interest/Access	0	None reported

RECOMMENDED INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

The institution should not respond by simply saying, “Maya has done this before.” It should respond by building a re-entry support protocol.

Pre-Semester Review

When Maya re-enrolls, the Care Team should conduct a proactive review of available prior case information, including reports, outreach attempts, accepted supports, declined supports, academic outcomes, withdrawal timing, and any safety-related concerns. The goal is not to punish Maya for returning. The goal is to avoid repeating the same ineffective pattern.

Structured Re-Entry Meeting

Maya should be invited to meet with Elena Park, academic advising, and accessibility services before or early in the semester.

Suggested message:

"Maya, we are glad you are enrolled again and want to support a successful semester. Because prior semesters became difficult and ended in withdrawal, we would like to create a short re-entry plan with you. This is not disciplinary. It is meant to clarify support options, communication expectations, and academic steps before problems build."

Clear Support Plan

- **Housing instability:** Warm referral to a housing navigation partner; confirm whether Maya has a safe place to sleep this week.
- **Medication continuity:** Encourage connection with medical/counseling provider; identify transportation or appointment barriers.
- **Academic participation:** Identify minimum attendance and assignment expectations for each course.
- **Distress disclosures:** Clarify that faculty can listen briefly and report concerns, but ongoing crisis support should go through Elena or counseling.
- **Written work:** Explain that coursework containing safety concerns may be reported for review.
- **Withdrawal risk:** Identify early warning signs and a point at which advising will discuss withdrawal, incomplete, or reduced-load options.

Faculty Guidance

Faculty should be prepared without being overloaded with private details. A privacy-conscious message might be:

"Maya has been connected with student support resources. You are not expected to provide counseling or case management. Please teach and evaluate the course as usual, document academic concerns, and submit a Care Team report if Maya discloses safety concerns, stops participating, or submits work suggesting significant distress."

Boundaries Around Crisis Disclosure

Faculty can use a simple script:

"Maya, I'm sorry you're dealing with this. I care about your success in this course, but I'm not the right person to provide ongoing crisis support. I'm going to connect this concern to Elena Park and the Care Team so they can follow up."

If Maya sends repeated late-night distress emails:

"Maya, I received your message and have shared the concern with the Care Team. For ongoing support, please respond to Elena Park. I will continue to communicate with you about course-related matters."

Support for Faculty and Staff

The institution should support faculty who feel anxious when Maya appears on a future roster. Their concern may be understandable, but ongoing emotional processing should not become the role of Care Team staff each time Maya enrolls.

- **Anxiety about Maya returning:** Offer one pre-semester consultation focused on role, boundaries, and reporting thresholds.
- **Fear of missing warning signs:** Provide a short checklist of what to report.
- **Concern about written assignments:** Clarify mandated reporting and Care Team referral thresholds.
- **Emotional burden:** Encourage consultation with department chair, employee assistance resources, or supervisor support.
- **Repeated contact from Maya:** Provide redirect scripts and centralized communication guidance.

Maya's case involves a pattern of repeated re-enrollment and crisis disclosure, not a pattern of targeted violence. The key risks are functional deterioration, academic collapse, continued instability in housing and medication, and overreliance on faculty as informal crisis responders.

The safest institutional posture is to welcome her back with structure, not stigma. Support faculty with guidance, not private details. Offer help clearly, but do not chase indefinitely. Respect autonomy, document refusal, and plan for the next enrollment before the same cycle repeats.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

SHOULD THE CARE TEAM CONDUCT A PROACTIVE REVIEW BEFORE THE SEMESTER BEGINS?

Yes, the Care Team should conduct a proactive review when Maya re-enrolls, especially because the pattern has repeated across semesters. A proactive review does not mean that Maya is being punished, unfairly monitored, or presumed unable to succeed. It means the institution is using known information to prevent the same cycle from repeating.

The review should focus on documented patterns rather than assumptions. The team should ask:

- What happened in prior semesters?
- What support was offered?
- What did Maya accept, miss, decline, or ignore?
- What academic outcomes occurred?
- Were there any safety concerns, mandated reports, threats, or welfare concerns?
- Which faculty or staff were repeatedly pulled into crisis-response roles?
- What would make this semester structurally different?

The review should produce a plan, not a label. The purpose is to prepare support, communication, and boundaries before the semester begins.

HOW SHOULD THE INSTITUTION SET EXPECTATIONS WITH MAYA EARLY, IN WRITING?

Expectations should be written in a supportive, concrete, and non-punitive way. The message should avoid sounding like a warning letter unless there is a specific conduct reason. It should clarify what support is available, what the student must do to access it, how faculty should be used, and what happens if distress or non-engagement recurs.

Suggested written expectations:

"Maya, we want to support your success this semester. Because prior semesters became difficult and ended in withdrawal, we are offering a structured support plan. The plan is designed to clarify who can help with what, how to communicate concerns, and what steps to take if housing, medication, or academic concerns begin affecting your participation."

The written plan should include expectations for the following (with example language):

- Primary contact: "Elena Park will be your primary student support contact."
- Faculty role: "Faculty can support course-related questions and submit concerns, but they are not available for ongoing crisis support."
- Crisis communication: "If you are in immediate danger or unable to stay safe, use emergency or crisis resources rather than email."
- Academic expectations: "Attendance, participation, and assignment requirements remain in effect unless modified through approved accommodations."

- Support engagement: "If you want assistance, you will need to respond to outreach and participate in scheduled meetings."
- Written assignments: "If coursework includes content suggesting safety concerns, faculty may submit a report for review."
- Withdrawal planning: "If you are considering withdrawal, contact advising before leaving courses so options can be reviewed."

The tone should be: "We want you to succeed, and here is the structure that makes support possible."

HOW SHOULD THE INSTITUTION COMMUNICATE WITH FACULTY WHO HAVE MAYA ENROLLED WHILE RESPECTING PRIVACY?

Faculty should receive role-based guidance, not private case details. The Care Team can usually tell faculty what they need to know to teach, respond appropriately, report concerns, and maintain boundaries. The team should avoid sharing unnecessary details about mental health, medication, housing, finances, or prior conduct unless there is a legitimate educational need or safety concern under institutional policy.

A privacy-conscious message to Professor Whitcomb or Dr. Moreno might be:

"The Care Team is aware of prior concerns and has a process for outreach if new concerns arise. You are not expected to provide counseling or case management. Please apply normal academic expectations, document course-related concerns, and submit a report if Maya discloses safety concerns, stops participating, or submits work that raises concern for self-harm, harm to others, or significant deterioration."

Faculty can be given:

- Reporting thresholds.
- Classroom boundary scripts.
- Guidance for concerning assignments.
- Emergency instructions.
- A reminder to avoid making promises of confidentiality.
- A contact point for consultation.

Faculty should not be given a full history simply because they are curious, anxious, or have heard rumors.

WHAT SHOULD FACULTY DO WHEN DISTRESS APPEARS IN ASSIGNMENTS OR CLASS COMMUNICATION?

Faculty should treat concerning content as information to route, not a problem to personally solve. They should preserve the assignment or communication, submit a Care Team report, and continue grading academic work according to course criteria unless instructed otherwise by policy.

Recommended faculty steps:

1. Read the work for academic purposes.
2. Identify whether the content suggests distress, self-harm, harm to others, inability to function, or immediate safety concerns.
3. Submit a Care Team report with the relevant excerpt or description.
4. Contact emergency resources if the content indicates imminent danger.
5. Avoid trying to provide counseling through grading feedback.
6. Continue using normal course expectations unless accommodations or administrative guidance apply.

Suggested faculty response to Maya:

"Maya, I read your assignment and I'm concerned about some of what you shared. I'm going to connect this concern to the Care Team so someone with the right role can follow up. My feedback on the assignment will focus on the course requirements."

If the assignment contains a direct threat, suicide plan, or imminent risk language, faculty should follow emergency reporting procedures immediately.

HOW DO WE DISTINGUISH STUDENT DISTRESS FROM CLASSROOM DISRUPTION?

Student distress is primarily about the student's well-being and functioning. Classroom disruption is about behavior that interferes with the learning environment, instruction, safety, or the rights of others.

Student Distress	Classroom Disruption
Maya writes about exhaustion, housing instability, panic, or medication confusion.	Maya repeatedly interrupts class, refuses redirection, or derails instruction.
Maya emails Professor Whitcomb late at night with distress, but no threats.	Maya sends repeated hostile or demanding messages after boundaries are set.
Maya stops attending or submitting work.	Maya's conduct in class prevents others from learning or creates fear.
Maya submits personal writing that raises concern.	Maya uses assignments to target, intimidate, threaten, or harass others.
Response	Response
The response is Care Team outreach and support planning.	The response may include classroom management, conduct referral, or administrative action.

Distress and disruption can overlap. The key question is not whether Maya is struggling, but whether her behavior is interfering with course operations, creating safety concerns, violating policy, or placing unreasonable demands on faculty.

WHEN DOES REPEATED NON-ENGAGEMENT WITH SUPPORT BECOME A CONDUCT, FITNESS-TO-PARTICIPATE, OR ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERN?

Repeated non-engagement is not automatically misconduct. Maya has the right to decline help in many circumstances. However, non-engagement becomes more concerning when the pattern creates predictable academic failure, repeated crisis escalation, significant disruption, safety concerns, or unsustainable impact on the educational environment.

It may become a conduct concern when Maya's behavior includes harassment, threats, abusive communication, repeated boundary violations, disruption, or refusal to comply with reasonable directives.

It may become a fitness-to-participate or administrative concern when Maya repeatedly cannot or does not meet essential academic or behavioral expectations, repeatedly withdraws after crisis escalation, or presents concerns that require structured review before continued participation. The exact process depends on institutional policy, disability/access obligations, conduct rules, academic standards, and legal guidance. Administrative concern increases when:

- Maya repeatedly enrolls but cannot participate academically.
- The same pattern creates repeated emergency response or mandated-reporting concerns.
- Faculty are repeatedly pulled into crisis roles.
- Maya refuses all direct support but continues using class channels for crisis disclosure.
- There are unresolved questions about whether she can safely and effectively participate without a plan.

The institution should consult appropriate policy owners, disability/accessibility staff, conduct administrators, and legal counsel before imposing mandatory conditions.

HOW DO WE SUPPORT FACULTY WITHOUT ASKING THEM TO BECOME CASE MANAGERS?

Faculty should receive support in the form of structure, not case details. The goal is to help faculty stay in role. Faculty should be told:

"You are responsible for teaching the course, applying academic standards, documenting concerns, and reporting safety or wellbeing issues. You are not responsible for providing counseling, housing support, medication guidance, or ongoing crisis response."

Support for faculty should include:

- A short pre-semester consultation when there is a known pattern.
- A written guide for what to report.
- Scripts for responding to distress disclosures.
- Clear boundaries for email communication.
- Department chair support when academic decisions are affected.
- A process for handling concerning assignments.
- Debriefing after highly stressful interactions.

Script for faculty:

"Maya, I care about your success in this course, but I cannot serve as your crisis support person. I'm going to share this concern with the Care Team. For ongoing help, please respond to Elena Park."

Faculty support should not become a series of repeated reassurance sessions with the Care Team every time Maya enrolls. A single structured consultation, written scripts, and clear reporting pathways are usually more sustainable.

HOW SHOULD THE INSTITUTION DOCUMENT PATTERNS ACROSS SEMESTERS?

The institution should document observable facts, dates, reports, outreach attempts, responses, referrals, missed meetings, academic impacts, safety concerns, and case outcomes. Documentation should avoid judgmental labels such as "attention-seeking," "manipulative," or "refuses to help herself."

Useful documentation categories include:

Category	What to Document
Enrollment pattern	Semesters enrolled, courses attempted, withdrawal dates, disappearing or stopping attendance.
Reported concerns	Housing instability, medication continuity, attendance, assignments, concerning writing, and faculty disclosures.
Outreach	Who contacted Maya, when, by what method, and what was offered.
Student response	Accepted, declined, missed, no response, partial engagement, hostile response.
Faculty impact	Repeated distress disclosures, late-night emails, requests for support, and faculty concern before future enrollment.
Academic impact	Missed work, incomplete assignments, stopped attending, withdrawal, failure to communicate with advising.
Safety screening	Any suicidal ideation, threat language, self-harm, harm-to-others indicators, or emergency actions.
Outcome	Case closed, referral made, withdrawal completed, re-entry review recommended.

A strong documentation phrase:

"Pattern noted across multiple semesters: student enrolls, discloses significant distress primarily to faculty, does not consistently engage with direct support outreach, stops participating academically, and withdraws or disappears. Recommend proactive re-entry planning upon future enrollment."

CAN THE INSTITUTION REQUIRE A RE-ENTRY MEETING, SUPPORT PLAN, OR BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS MEETING AFTER REPEATED WITHDRAWALS OR ESCALATIONS?

Possibly, but this depends on institutional policy, applicable law, disability/access considerations, academic standards, conduct history, and the specific facts. The institution should not create ad hoc requirements based on discomfort, rumor, disability status, or generalized concern. Any required meeting or plan should be grounded in documented behavior, academic participation concerns, safety concerns, conduct concerns, or established administrative processes. A voluntary re-entry meeting is often the best first step.

A required meeting may be appropriate when policy allows, and there is a documented basis, such as repeated withdrawals after crisis escalation, unresolved conduct expectations, repeated disruption, or safety concerns requiring review.

A behavioral expectations meeting may be appropriate if Maya's communications or conduct have crossed boundaries, disrupted operations, or created repeated unreasonable demands on faculty. The meeting should focus on behavior and process, not diagnosis or assumptions.

A support plan may be encouraged or coordinated, but mandatory treatment, medication compliance, or counseling participation should be approached carefully and reviewed under institutional policy and legal guidance.

Recommended framing:

"Maya, based on the repeated pattern of enrollment followed by significant distress, non-engagement with support, academic non-completion, and withdrawal, the college is asking you to meet with designated staff before the semester begins. The purpose is to clarify support options, academic expectations, communication boundaries, and next steps if concerns re-emerge."

The safest approach is to use the least restrictive structure that addresses the documented pattern.

