Suicide Prevention Protocol

STATEMENT

Suicide is the second leading cause of death of college students. The stress of the college experience and the normal developmental issues of young adulthood place some students under emotional pressures that, occasionally, manifests itself in a threat or attempt by the student to take his or her own life. The College will treat all threats or attempted suicides as serious. When a student threatens or attempts suicide, the College will take the steps necessary to ensure the safety of that student and any other individuals in the college setting. Suicide, attempted suicide, and suicidal gestures have detrimental effects on both the involved student and other students in the college community environment.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this protocol is to provide education and guidance to faculty, staff, students and other members of the college community to help prevent student suicide at Blue Ridge Community and Technical College. College community members should be able to effectively assist students who have:

a) engaged in suicidal behavior and may be in need of emergency medical attention
b) communicated a suicide threat and may be at imminent risk for suicidal behavior
c) exhibited warning signs for suicide and may be at some risk for suicidal behavior

DEFINITIONS

Suicide: Death from an injury which is self-inflicted and by which the student intended to kill himself or herself.

Suicidal Behavior: Any potentially injurious behavior which is self-inflicted and by which a student intends, or gives the appearance of intending, to kill himself or herself.

Suicide Threat: Any interpersonal action, verbal or non-verbal, that a reasonable person would interpret as communicating or suggesting that suicidal behavior may be imminent.

Suicidal Ideation: Any self-reported thoughts or feelings about engaging in suicidal behavior.

Suicide Plan: A proposed method of self-inflicted injury through which the potential and intentional outcome is death.

CONTRIBUTING TO STUDENT WELLNESS

- Take every complaint or reference to suicide very, very seriously.
- Be supportive.
- Avoid being judgmental or argumentative about moral issues regarding suicide.
Evaluate the immediate risk. Ask specific questions and generate a conversation in order to gain information on the following:

- Is there a suicide plan?
- Is there a means to carry out the plan?
- Is there a time schedule?

PREVENTION

Students will receive information about Suicide Prevention and other behavioral health struggles in emails, activities, focus groups, and campus awareness events. New students will be provided information during new student orientation. Other prevention awareness information will be presented to students during Freshman Experience Classes, Student Email listserv, and the campus student newsletter. The goal of the educational programming offered by Student Services is to promote the understanding concerning the dynamics of suicide and other behavioral health struggles and to recognize behaviors that may signal suicidal intent. Brochures and flyers will be distributed and provided regarding depression, general principles about mental health, stress, and related topics to student’s concerns.

The College will complete multiple events throughout each academic year. These events will be determined as the academic year is planned. Each September, the College will participate in the Suicide Awareness week. Focus groups, Lunch and Learns, and other events will contribute to bringing awareness and prevention to the College community.

Information will also be made available to faculty and staff regarding how to recognize behaviors that may signal suicidal intent. Guidelines in this manual will also be shared with staff to provide them with the necessary information in relation to intervention.

Warning Signs of Suicide:

The most common Warning Signs of Suicide are described below:

- **Ideation**: talk of suicide, researching suicide means, preoccupation with death
- **Substance abuse**: increasing abuse of drugs or alcohol
- **Purposelessness**: lacking meaning or purpose, having no reason to live, a sudden loss
- **Anxiety**: restlessness, inability to sleep, panic and anxiety
- **Trapped**: feeling there is no way out, stuck in unbearable pain
- **Hopelessness**: depression, despair, feeling like a burden to others
- **Withdrawal**: isolating oneself from friends, family or others, feeling alienated
- **Anger**: exhibiting uncontrolled rage or wanting to seek revenge
- **Recklessness**: thoughtless or impulsive engagement in risky activities
- **Mood changes**: displaying extreme or dramatic changes of mood or behavior
- **Other**: getting affairs in order, having a suicide plan, past suicide attempts
Any member of the college community who learns that a student is exhibiting warning signs of suicide, but has not engaged in suicidal behavior or communicated a suicide threat, should contact a Crisis Team Member, for support, especially if the student is exhibiting suicidal ideation. If there is immediate crisis, contact 9-1-1.

For immediate assistance with a student if the Enrollment Management Office is closed, the 24-Hour Crisis Line (304) 263-8954, provided by East Ridge Health Systems can be called.

A student may also be referred directly to East Ridge Health Systems at (304) 263-8954 for counseling and to be encouraged to make an appointment on his/her own. However, with the student’s permission, a call may be made on their behalf, together with the college community member, and/or the student can be accompanied to make the appointment.

**PROTOCOL**

In the event a member of the college community learns, either directly or indirectly, that a student has a) engaged in suicidal behavior; b) communicated a suicide threat; or c) exhibited warning signs for suicide, that student should be referred for assistance according to the procedures outlined below.

Please note: If you are ever uncertain about how to proceed and no one is available for consultation, do not hesitate to call 911.

**PROCEDURES**

A.) **Suicidal Behavior:** If a student appears to be in imminent danger of harming himself/herself, take the following immediate action:

- Any member of the college community who learns that a student has just engaged in suicidal behavior, is in the process of engaging in, or is about to engage in suicidal behavior, should immediately report this behavior to emergency personnel by calling 911. **Do not leave the student unattended.**
- If possible, provide responding emergency personnel with any pertinent information that is known about the student.
- Contact the **Associate Dean of Students** as soon as possible at (304) 260-4380 ext. 2109. The Associate Dean may then consult, activate and/or convene with the Crisis Team to help coordinate information, identify support strategies, and develop/implement a follow-up action plan.
- If the Associate Dean of Students is not available, please contact a Crisis Team Member.

B.) **Suicide Threat:** If a student threatens suicide (verbal or written), and/or evidence of recent superficial wounds are observed, and the degree of imminent danger is unclear, take the following immediate action:
Any member of the college community who learns that a student has *communicated a suicide threat* should contact the **Associate Dean of Students** as soon as possible at (304) 260-4380 ext. 2109. The Associate Dean may then consult, activate or convene with the Crisis Team to help coordinate information, identify support strategies, and develop/implement an action plan.

If the Associate Dean of Students is not available, please contact a member of the Crisis Team.

If the Enrollment Management Office is closed, call the 24-Hour Crisis Line (304) 263-8954 provided by East Ridge Health Systems.

- A student who has communicated a suicide threat may be required to be assessed by a mental health professional to determine the level of suicide risk.
- The assessment may be performed by the Student Development Coordinator, a mental health professional in the community, or a crisis worker in the community.
- All suicide threats should be taken seriously. No attempt to independently evaluate the validity or imminence of the suicide threat should be made by a non-professional.
- If at any point it seems reasonable to assume that *suicidal behavior is imminent*, especially if the student is uncooperative with attempts to help, call **911**. Share the student’s name, description, details of the suicide threat, and location/destination (if known).

**PROMOTING INTEGRATION BACK INTO THE CLASSROOM**

A student requiring re-integration into the college community will meet with the Student Development Coordinator prior to his/her return to school. The student must also provide documentation supporting the need for an excused absence.

**TRAINING**

Further education and training in identifying and assisting emotionally distressed and at-risk students is provided by Leslie See, Vice President of Enrollment, and is available upon request. To inquire about training, contact Leslie See, 304-260-4380 ext 2107; lsee@blueridgepte.edu.

**FOR REFERRALS**

Our College supports students’ mental health and wellness. We contract with East Ridge Health Systems, a local community mental health facility. This partnership helps students with mental illness and adjustment issues to live productive lives and to succeed academically. This program is allows for the student to be seen up to three times by a therapist.

The 844-HELP4WV call line can also provide services to those battling behavioral health struggles, such as suicide and depression.

During regular business hours - Contact KatieThompson, Student Development Coordinator, at (304) 260-4380 ext. 2117 or kthompson@blueridgepte.edu.
If the Student Development Coordinator is not available, contact Brenda Neal, Associate Dean of Students, at (304) 260-4380 ext. 2109 or email bneal@blueridgectc.edu.

After hours, call the **24-Hour Crisis Line, (304) 263-8954**, provided by East Ridge Health Systems, the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK, or 1-800-SUICIDE. A **Crisis Worker** will then be available at this number for assessment and crisis intervention.

**PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING A DECEASED STUDENT**

The impact that a student’s death has on a family is difficult to anticipate or imagine. Respect and care should be taken when addressing the family members of a deceased student.

If you learn of a student’s death, please notify the Associate Dean of Students or the Vice President of Enrollment. The Associate Dean of Students will contact the family to offer condolences on behalf of the College. The Associate Dean of Students will notify the deceased student’s instructors and inform them that counseling is available if the class or individual members in the class feel the need to speak with a counselor. Public notification such as the list serve will be determined on a case by case basis.
MORE SELF-HELP INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

**In Crisis:**
Immediate Emergency
Call 9-1-1

East Ridge Health System Crisis Line
304-263-8954

**On-Campus Crisis Team Members:**
*Brenda Neal*
Ext 2109

*Leslie See*
Ext 2107

*Michele Morrison*
Ext 3329

*Chris Cobian*
Ext 2125

*Randy Spies*
Ext 2303

*Megan Michael*
Ext 2403

*Michelle Smith*
Ext. 2117

*David Teets*
Ext 3412

*Security*
Ext 2250

**Community Mental Health Resources:**
*EastRidge Health Systems*
304-263-8954
www.eastridgehealthsystems.org

*Shenandoah Women's Center*
304-263-8522
www.swcinc.org

*Behavioral Health Services at Shenandoah Community Health Center*
304-263-4999

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**ULifeline**
Your online resource for college mental health.
ulifeline.org

**The Jed Foundation**
Promoting emotional health and preventing suicide.
www.jedfoundation.org/

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**
nami.org

**The Trevor Lifeline (for LGBTQ youth)**
866-488-7386
thetrevorproject.org

**Veterans Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 Press 1
veteranscrisisline.net

**WV Help Call Line**
1-844-HELP4WV
Call line can also provide services to those battling behavioral health struggles, such as suicide and depression.
PROCEDURE CHECKLIST AND QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE:

1. Stay with the student or designate another Blue Ridge employee to supervise the student constantly and without exception until help arrives.
2. Under no circumstances should you allow the student to leave the school alone or with non-family members.
3. Do not agree to keep a student’s suicidal intentions a secret.
4. If the student has the means to carry out the threatened suicide on his or her person, determine if he or she will voluntarily relinquish it. Do not force the student to do so. Do not place yourself in danger.
5. Take the suicidal student to an area away from others.
6. Notify the Associate Dean of Students immediately. If the Associate Dean of Students is not available notify the Student Development Coordinator immediately. After hours, call the 24-Hour Crisis Line, (304) 263-8954, provided by East Ridge Health Systems. A Mobile Crisis Worker will then be available at this number for assessment and crisis intervention.
7. Inform the suicidal student that outside help has been called and describe what the next steps will be.

Is the Student in Imminent Danger?

- **YES**
  - **CALL 911**
  - **NOTIFY ASSOCIATE DEAN OF STUDENTS OR CRISIS TEAM MEMBERS**

- **UNCERTAIN**
  - **BETWEEN OFFICE HOURS OF 8:00AM-4:30PM**
  - **NOTIFY ASSOCIATE DEAN OF STUDENTS OR CRISIS TEAM MEMBERS**
  - **AFTER CAMPUS BUSINESS HOURS 4:30PM-8:00AM**
  - **EAST RIDGE HEALTH SYSTEMS CRISIS LINE 304-263-8954**