

Suicide Prevention Protocol

STATEMENT

Recognizing suicide as the second leading cause of death among college students, Blue Ridge Community and Technical College aims to create a community who supports mental health. Stressors from the college experience may place students under emotional pressures occasionally manifesting in a threat to harm themselves or attempt suicide. The College commits to treating all threats and attempts seriously and will act by taking necessary steps to ensure the student's safety.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this protocol is to provide preventative resources through education and guidance for faculty, staff, and students. College community members should be able to effectively assist students *who have engaged in suicidal behavior* and may need emergency medical attention, *communicated a suicide threat* and may be at imminent risk for suicidal behavior, and/or *exhibited warning signs for suicide*.

LANGUAGE

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.

IMPORTANT WARNING SIGNS

- **Anger:** exhibiting uncontrolled rage or wanting to seek revenge
- **Anxiety:** restlessness, inability to sleep, panic and anxiety
- **Hopelessness:** depression, despair, feeling like a burden to others
- **Mood changes:** displaying extreme or dramatic changes of mood or behavior
- **Planning:** getting affairs in order, having a suicide plan, past suicide attempts
- **Recklessness:** thoughtless or impulsive engagement in risky activities
- **Substance misuse:** increasing use of drugs or alcohol
- **Withdrawal:** isolating oneself from friends, family or others, feeling alienated

CONTRIBUTING TO STUDENT WELLNESS

Evaluate the immediate risk, and view every reference to suicide as a serious concern. Begin a non-judgmental and compassionate conversation by asking specific questions. Generating a conversation will gain further information. Make sure to note:

- 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 concerns in emails, activities, focus groups, and campus awareness events. New students will be provided information during new student orientation. The goal of educational programming is to promote the understanding of the dynamics of suicide and to recognize behaviors that may signal suicidal intent. Available suicide awareness and prevention materials will include topics such as depression, healthy coping techniques, and mental health principles.

Faculty and staff will also have access to information regarding recognizing suicidal behaviors. Guidelines in this manual will also be shared with faculty and staff to provide them necessary information in relation to intervention.

PROTOCOL

In the event a member of the college community directly or indirectly learns a student has *engaged in suicidal behavior, communicated a suicide threat, or exhibited warning signs for suicide*, refer the student for assistance according to the procedures outlined below.

***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 themselves, take the following immediate action:

- 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 Jennifer Barrett Smith, Assistant Dean of Student Outreach, as soon as possible at (304) 260-4380 ext. 2109.
- In the absence of the Assistant Dean of Student Outreach contact the Office of Accessibility Services Student Development Coordinator at 304.260.4380 ext. 2117.

B.) **Suicide Threat**: Take the following immediate action if a student threatens suicide (oral or written), there is evidence of recent superficial wounds, and the degree of imminent danger is unclear:

- Contact Jennifer Barrett Smith, Assistant Dean of Student Outreach, as soon as possible at 304.260.4380 ext. 2109.
- In the absence of the Assistant Dean of Student Outreach contact the Office of Accessibility Services Student Development Coordinator at 304.260.4380 ext. 2117.
- If the College is closed, call the 24-Hour Crisis Line 304.263.8954 provided by East Ridge Health Systems.

PROMOTING REINTEGRATION BACK INTO THE CLASSROOM

A student requiring reintegration into the college community will meet with the Office of Accessibility

Services Student Development Coordinator prior to their return to school. The student must also provide documentation supporting the need for an excused absence.

- 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.

TRAINING

Further education and training in identifying and assisting emotionally distressed and at-risk students will be provided by the Office of Accessibility Services Student Development Coordinator and is available upon request. Contact 304.260.4380 ext. 2117 or access@blueridgectc.edu to inquire about training.

MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND REFERRALS

The College supports and values the mental health and wellness of all students. The College contracts with the local community mental health facility, EastRidge Health Systems. This partnership supports students with mental illness to live productive lives and succeed academically. Students will receive 1 free consultation and 2 free therapy sessions.

Help 304, West Virginia's Emotional Strength Line, provides immediate support for those dealing with addiction and other mental health concerns. If experiencing an emotional crisis, contact their counseling services at 844.435.7304 or chat through the website at Help304.com. All services are free and available 24/7.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress. They provide specific resources for people struggling with various tribulations, including but not limited to disaster survivors, attempt survivors, veterans. Services are accessible for non-English speakers and people with hearing loss. Call 800.273.8255 or chat using their website suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to the LGBTQIA+ community. The Trevor Project also provides educational resources for allies. Call 866.488.7386 to speak with an advocate.

ULifeline is an anonymous, confidential, online resource center for college students seeking a safe space to discuss and learn more about mental health. ULifeline is a program of The Jed Foundation, the nation's leading nonprofits public organization working to prevent suicide among college students and improve the mental health support available on campuses nationwide. Text "START" to 741-741 or call 800.273.TALK (8255).

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING A DECEASED STUDENT

The impact of a student's death on their family is difficult to anticipate or imagine. If you learn of a student's death, please notify the Assistant Dean of Student Outreach or the Office of Accessibility Services Student Development Coordinator. The Assistant Dean of Student Outreach will contact the family to offer condolences on behalf of the College. The Assistant Dean of Student Outreach will also notify the deceased student's instructors to inform them counseling is available for the class or individual members in the class who feel the need to speak with a therapist.

OVERVIEW AND QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

