

PROCEDURES FOLLOWING SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

INTRODUCTION: Suicide is a leading cause of death among people ages 15 to 24. These procedures help enhance the safety and well-being of students who may be at risk of suicide and other members of the campus community.

DEFINITION: The Suicide Prevention Resource Center provides these definitions:

- A **suicide attempt** as “a nonfatal, self-directed, potentially injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior. A suicide attempt may or may not result in injury.”
- A **suicidal crisis** is “a suicide attempt or an incident in which an emotionally distraught person seriously considers or plans to attempt imminently to take his or her own life.”
- **Suicide** is “the act of intentionally taking one’s own life.”

REPORTING: Because suicidal attempts may result in death, early identification of persons at risk for suicide is essential.

1. Seek help when individuals are talking about suicide or have taken any actions that might lead to a possible suicide attempt.
2. When learning that a student has threatened or attempted suicide:
 - A. If the individual is aggressive, violent, harmful to self or others, call 911. Do not attempt to handle the situation alone.
 - B. Report all suicide attempts to 911 and Campus Safety at 3911 immediately.
 - C. Call Campus Safety at 3911 if using a Viterbo phone. Call 608-796-3911 or 608-780-1582 if using a non-Viterbo phone.
 - D. When an emotionally distraught person seriously considers or plans to attempt imminently to take his or her own life. When this occurs:
 - i. Try to calm and isolate the individual.
 - ii. Do not leave the individual alone. Stay until professional help arrives.
 - iii. Determine if there is a risk of the individual harming him or herself (i.e., attempting suicide, alcohol overdose, self-injury, etc.) or others and refer appropriately.
 - iv. Promote hope by listening to the individual. Try not to interrupt the individual.
 - v. Ask if there is anyone that the individual is comfortable talking to about this (parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, coaches, friends, mentors, priests, or professors).
 - vi. Provide information on counseling resources such as Viterbo Counseling Services, Great Rivers 211, or counseling services at a local hospital.
 - E. In the event of threat to self or others, call 911. Call Campus Safety at 3911 if using a Viterbo phone; 608-796-3911 or 608-780-1582 if using a non-Viterbo phone.
 - F. In the event of an emergency, call 911 and law enforcement will dispatch assistance as appropriate.

UNIVERSITY INTERVENTION:

1. The University’s intervention efforts typically begin with two or more of the following operations working in collaboration: Campus Safety, Counseling Services, Residence Life, and/or the Vice President Student Affairs. The La Crosse Police Department may assist.
2. Once an individual has been identified as at risk for suicide, the individual is expected to cooperate with University personnel and/or medical personnel in taking any necessary measures to reduce the likelihood that a suicide attempt will be made. In the event that they are not cooperative, the university may call law enforcement for assistance.

3. Personnel from the local police department, and/or a local hospital emergency room will assess the student's danger of harming her/himself. The assessment will help determine if the student is hospitalized.
4. If a student is hospitalized, it is because the hospital staff believes that the student is in danger of harming her/himself (or others).
5. If a student is hospitalized, a Residence Life professional staff member, the Director of Counseling Services, or the Vice President for Student Affairs will notify the parents, provide the hospital phone number, and outline next steps. Within 24 hours, the Vice President for Student Affairs will have a follow up conversation to assist the parents.
6. A university official (typically Campus Safety, Counseling Services, Residence Life, and/or the Vice President for Student Affairs) may believe that there is a direct threat to the safety of a student, or that someone is at risk of danger. In such a case, the university official may contact appropriate family members, individuals a student has identified as emergency contacts, or others as the University deems necessary or appropriate under the circumstances.
 - A. Notification to parents or next of kin takes place by default if any life-threatening attempt is made or if Counseling Services personnel believes that a student is in danger.
 - B. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR 99.36) provides for the release of normally protected student data when it is believed that a student represents a health or safety risk to self or others.
3. Counseling Services personnel will follow professional ethical guidelines when suicidal or potentially suicidal students seek help directly from that office.
 - A. The general requirement that counselors keep information confidential does not apply when disclosure is required to prevent clear and imminent danger to the student(s) or others or when legal requirements demand that confidential information is revealed. Counseling Services consults with other professionals when in doubt as to the validity of an exception.
 - B. Counseling Services will consult to faculty/employees if they call with questions, but will not reveal any clinical information about the student.
4. If a student with suicidal ideation or behavior refuses counseling and/or another outside resource, it will be documented that the service was recommended, offered, and refused by the student.

ONCE THE IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY HAS PASSED:

1. The Vice President for Student Affairs will be notified if this has not occurred previously.
2. The appropriate family members, individuals a student has identified as emergency contacts, and/or others may be contacted as the University deems necessary or appropriate under the circumstances. Notification to parents or next of kin takes place by default if any life-threatening attempt is made or if Counseling Services personnel believes that a student is in danger.
3. The Director of Student Academic Success and/or the Director of the Academic Resource Center/Disability Services may be contacted to assist in notifying instructors, advisors, and/or other university personnel of absences, the need for academic schedule adjustments, or other appropriate services.
4. Accommodations may be requested from the Director of the Academic Resource Center/Disability Services.
5. The student and/or parents may request a leave of absence.
6. The student may be asked to comply with conditions designed to improve his or her chances of success or that of others affected.

7. Students who have been hospitalized must meet with the Director of Counseling Services to help the student transition back to campus and to review the treatment plan.
8. Students who have been hospitalized must provide the Director of Counseling Services with documentation from treating hospital psychiatrist, therapist, and/or physician including, but not limited to a summary of the student's hospitalization including diagnosis, discharge plan, treatment, medications, readiness to return to class and/or residence.
9. The Director of Counseling Services uses information from the hospital to make a recommendation to the Vice President for Student Affairs about whether or not a student should return to classes, campus life, on-campus work, and/or living on campus.
10. In very rare circumstances, when all other measures prove ineffective, the University require a leave of absence.
11. In the event of a student death, the university administration will follow procedures for response to a student death.

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