

## **PROCEDURES FOLLOWING STUDENT SUICIDE ATTEMPTS, GESTURES, INTENTIONS, PLANS, OR THREATS**

**INTRODUCTION:** Suicide is known to be a leading cause of death for college and university students. In addition, suicide attempts, gestures, intentions, plans, or threats may have a detrimental effect on the student and others. These procedures are designed to help enhance the safety and well-being of students who may be at risk of suicide and other members of the campus community.

**DEFINITION:** For the purpose of this policy, suicide is the purposeful act of causing one's own death. Attempted suicide is any act, gesture, plan, or threat, or in which a person engages in life threatening behavior(s) with the intent of jeopardizing his/her life.

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

1. Help should be sought when individuals are talking about suicide or have taken any actions that could be interpreted as leading 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. All suicide attempts should be reported to 911 and Campus Safety at 3911 immediately.
  - C. Call Campus Safety at 3911 if using a Viterbo phone; 608-796-3911 or 608-780-1582 if using a non-Viterbo phone.
  - D. A psychological crisis may exist when an individual is delusional, out of touch with reality, or threatening harm to self or others. The crisis may be manifested as paranoia, disruptive behavior, anger, yelling, or self-injury. When encountering such situations, one should:
    - i. 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.
    - ii. Listen carefully before offering options.
    - iii. Offer encouragement and provide helpful tips.
    - iv. Encourage counseling, support from friends and family, seeking assistance with life goals, and/or seeking assistance with income and accommodations.
  - E. In the event of threat to self or others, call 911.
    - i. Call Campus Safety at 3911 if using a Viterbo phone; 608-796-3911 or 608-780-1582 if using a non-Viterbo phone.
    - ii. Try to calm and isolate the individual.
  - F. Do not leave the individual alone. Stay until professional help arrives.
  - G. 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 Development. The La Crosse Police Department may also be contacted to 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.
3. Assessment of the student's danger of harming her/himself will be assessed and determined by personnel from Counseling Services, the local police department, and/or a local hospital emergency room. Based on the assessment, a student may or may not be hospitalized.
4. If the student is hospitalized, it is because the hospital staff believes that the student is in danger of harming her/himself (or others). Parents will be notified by the Director of Residence Life, the Assistant Director of Residence Life, a Residence Life Community Coordinator, the Director of Counseling Services, or the Vice President for Student Development.
5. When a University official (typically Campus Safety, Counseling Services, Residence Life, and/or the Vice President for Student Development) believes that there is a direct threat to the safety of a student, or any other person, is at risk, 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 the 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 be revealed. Counseling Services consults with other professionals when in doubt as to the validity of an exception.

- B. Counseling Services will also provide consulting services to university employees upon request to assist staff in working with students on issues related to suicide. University faculty and/or staff member who are concerned about questions may call Counseling Services.
4. If a student has evidenced suicidal ideation or behavior and 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 Development 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 complete the following to obtain approval to return to classes and/or living on campus. To obtain such approval, the student must:
  - A. Provide the Director of Counseling Services with documentation from treating hospital psychiatrist, therapist, and/or physician including a discharge summary, a psychological assessment, and a Provider Assessment and Release Form indicating that the student is ready to return to classes and/or living on campus.
  - B. Meet with the Director of Counseling Services. The purpose of the meeting is to determine, to the best of the university's ability, that the student has adequate support on campus and is ready to engage in to classes, extra-curricular activities, living on campus, and/or on-campus employment.
    - i. The student is required to meet with the Director of Counseling Services regardless of any meetings with this or another mental health provider, psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or therapist.
    - ii. The parent(s) or guardian(s) will be encouraged to attend the meeting.
8. The Vice President for Student Development, after input from a variety of sources, makes the final decision about whether or not a student can return to classes, campus life, on-campus work, and/or living on campus.
  - A. If the student is authorized to return to classes, extra-curricular activities, living on campus, and/or on-campus employment, the student will have a minimum of two more mandatory sessions with the Director of Counseling Services, whether or not the student is in private counseling with an outside provider.
  - B. Written communication to the student from the Vice President for Student Development will follow a hospital discharge.
9. In very rare circumstances, when all other measures prove ineffective, the University may suspend or withdraw a student using the procedures outlined administrative withdrawal procedures and/or the *Code of Student Conduct*.
10. In the event of a student death, Viterbo University procedures for response to a student death will be followed.