

SUICIDAL STUDENTS

Facts about Suicide

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students
- Las Vegas has the highest rate of suicide in the United States
- Approximately 80% of people who have attempted suicide discussed their intent to do so with someone around them
- Most people who contemplate suicide are ambivalent about killing themselves and typically respond to help
- Suicidal states are definitely time limited
- Among teenagers and young adults, attempting suicide is likely to be impulsive and triggered by a major life stressor such as a loss or threat of loss
- Most people who commit suicide are not psychotic
- People contemplating suicide often reach out, directly or indirectly, to those they think will take them seriously, particularly people who are older than themselves

High Risk Indicators

- Negative perceptions of life
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, & futility
- Making comments suggestive of wanting to die
 - ✓ “I just want to sleep forever”
 - ✓ “I don’t care if I’m assaulted”
 - ✓ “I don’t care if my car hits a tree”
- Severe loss or threat of loss
- History of a previous suicide attempt
- Family history of suicide, depression, or psychosis
- History of drug or alcohol abuse
- History of self-damaging acts
- Demonstrating clouded judgment

HIGHEST Risk of Suicide When the Student

- Has a specific, detailed plan for killing her/himself
- Has the means complete her/his plan, such as medication, knives, or gun
- Is socially isolated and/or alienated

Myths about Suicide

- People who talk about suicide never commit suicide
- People who talk about suicide are merely trying to gain attention
- Asking someone directly about suicidal feelings will lead to a suicide attempt

What to Do

- If you suspect a student may be suicidal, directly ask if she/he feels like hurting her/himself
- Take any direct or implied threats of suicide and/or gestures that suggest suicidal intent seriously
 - ✓ Talking directly about suicide
 - ✓ Writing about suicide
 - ✓ Giving away prized possessions
- Be available to listen, to talk, to be concerned, but refer the student to mental health professionals
- If a student is actively suicidal, do not leave her/him alone & send someone for help
- If a suicide attempt is actually in progress, call 911 to get immediate medical care
- If you receive a message from a student (e.g., an e-mail) that states she/he intends to commit suicide and/or harm someone else
 1. Immediately attempt to contact the student
 - a. Be prepared to provide the student information about how to access emergency resources (e.g., suicide hotline numbers, the mental health crisis unit telephone number)
 - b. Attempt to establish the student's current location
 - c. Be prepared to contact the police department in whose jurisdiction the student is currently located
 - d. Notify those persons identified in the College's crisis response plan
 2. If you are unable to make contact with the student and it is within regular business hours, consult with those persons identified in the College's crisis response plan
 3. If you are unable to make contact with the student and it is outside of regular business hours, call your local police department for assistance in determining a plan of action
- If you are in doubt about the seriousness of the situation, contact a mental health professional immediately - the Suicide Hotline of Clark County and the Suicide Hotline of Nevada are two good places to start
- Be sure to take care of yourself! Helping someone who is suicidal is hard, demanding, and draining work

What Not to Do

- Do not minimize the situation or depth of feeling
- Do not argue with the student about the merits of living
- Do not agree to be bound by confidentiality
- Do not over commit yourself and, therefore, not be able to deliver on what you promise
- Do not ignore your limitations
- Do not allow friends to take care of the student without getting a professional opinion

This information was adapted from various sources. For more information or assistance, please contact:

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Cheyenne Campus, Room 1088, (702) 651-4099

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