



# Protocols for Assisting the Acutely Distressed or Suicidal Person

NAME: **Protocols for Assisting the Acutely Distressed or Suicidal Person**  
ISSUING DEPARTMENT: **Student Affairs**  
ISSUED DATE: **November 12, 2019**  
REVIEWED DATE: **November 12, 2019**  
APPROVING AUTHORITY: **Cabinet**  
DATE REVISED: **November 5, 2019**

## **PURPOSE**

It is the intention of this policy to provide protocols outlining a campus-wide approach to managing the student in acute distress or at risk for suicide and fulfilling the Suicide Prevention in Institutions of Higher Education Act 110 approved by the Pennsylvania Legislature on October 24, 2018

## **SCOPE**

This procedure concerns all instructional and non-instructional departments.

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

Cabinet for approval; Student Affairs, Student Living, Counseling Center, Behavior Intervention Team (BIT) for annual review, dissemination and implementation. Within the first month of the fall and spring semesters, all students will receive an email from the Dean of Students with information about mental health support resources. Employees are initially given this information at their New Employee Orientation with updates shared, as needed.

## **EDUCATION, AWARENESS & PREVENTION**

Mansfield University is committed to the health and well-being of all students, faculty and staff. Awareness of and access to mental health and suicide prevention resources is critical to educating and supporting students. The professional counseling staff at Mansfield University is available to meet with students to discuss self-understanding, feelings of depression or loneliness, sexuality issues, stress, performance anxiety, career decisions, study habits and time management; homesickness, understanding relationships, concentrations and studying; academic advising, eating disorders and learning disabilities.

Free, confidential counseling services are offered to students as follows:

1. **Individualized counseling** for personal problem-solving consists of a one-to-one approach employing a variety of accepted counseling techniques.
2. **Group counseling** consists of a small group of peers plus a member of the counseling staff. Groups may focus on a specific topic such as assertiveness training, stress reduction, test anxiety, career exploration, or college adjustment or may have a more general focus of self-understanding.
3. **Consultation services** are provided to the faculty, staff and community-at-large on a variety of

topics. Workshops may be delivered in the classroom, residence halls, or with a community group. Counseling staff will also refer to, and work in conjunction with, outside professionals (i.e., psychiatrists, medical doctors), if this becomes necessary. If a psychiatric evaluation is appropriate, the University will refer students to a consulting psychiatrist. **The evaluation and the first three visits will be at no cost to the student.**

## **Mansfield University Counseling Center**

South Hall, Room 144  
1-570-662-4436 or 1-570-662-4695

### **Hours:**

**Monday** - 8:00 a.m. to 7:00p.m.

**Tuesday** - 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

**Wednesday** - 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

**Thursday** - 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

**Friday** - 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**After hours**, call campus police (1-570-662-4900).

## **Other Community Resources**

Northern Tier Counseling, Inc.  
1550 S. Main St., Mansfield, PA (570) 662-7954

Tioga Counseling Services  
St. James Street, Mansfield, PA (570) 62-7600

Mansfield Laurel Health Center  
416 S. Main St., Mansfield, PA (570) 662-2002

Outpatient Counseling/Therapy  
114 East Avenue, Wellsboro, PA (570) 723-0620

### **Sayre Site**

Northern Tier Counseling, Inc.  
846 Main St., Towanda, PA (570) 265-0977

Bradford & Sullivan County  
Offices of Mental Health  
220 Main Street, Unit 1, Towanda, PA 18848 (570) 265-1760  
After hours call: Concern Crisis Intervention (887) 724-7142

## **CRISIS INTERVENTION SERVICES**

### **National Resources**

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org), 1-800-273-8255

**Crisis Text Line:** [crisistextline.org](http://crisistextline.org). text HOME to 741741 at any time for any type of crisis. A person of color who is experiencing a crisis can also text STEVE to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor of color.

**Mental Health TAP Line:** 1-800-222-9016, local community agency providing 24-hour crisis intervention

**National Alliance on Mental Illness** (available 24/7): 1-888-264-7972; Text “NAMI” to 741741.

### **LOCAL RESOURCES**

**Mansfield University Counseling Center**

#### **IN THE EVENT OF A CRISIS OR EMERGENCY**

**MANSFIELD UNIVERSITY POLICE DEPARTMENT** (570) 622-4900

**EMERGENCY OFF CAMPUS:** 911

**HEALTH & INFIRMARY SERVICE** (570) 662-4350  
**(Ground floor of Spruce Hall)**

**MANSFIELD BORO POLICE** (570) 662-3093

**PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE** (570) 622-2151

#### **SAYRE SITE**

**GUTHRIE SITE SAFETY AND SECURITY OFFICE** (570) 887-4207

**GUTHRIE ROBERT PACKER HOSPITAL** (570) 888-6666

**SAYRE BOROUGH POLICE DEPARTMENT** (570) 888-2233

An emergency or crisis situation is one in which an individual feels they have little or no control. These signs or symptoms may include:

- inability to concentrate or relax
- have not eaten in a few days (or have eaten very little) - not due to illness
- have not slept or have slept very little for a few days - not due to illness
- loss of interest in formerly enjoyable activities
- irrational fears
- chronic fatigue
- extreme anxiety or restlessness
- inability to stop crying
- extreme mood swings
- thoughts of hurting self
- thoughts of hurting others
- suicidal thoughts, plans, threats

**NOTE:** THESE ARE NOT THE ONLY SYMPTOMS OF A CRISIS, MERELY SOME OF THE MORE COMMON ONES. STUDENTS SHOULD SEEK HELP REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT THE SYMPTOMS MATCH THOSE IN THIS LIST.

Students who feel out of control or knows someone who is in danger of **self-harm** or **suicide**, or is feeling **"out of control"** are encourage to **GET HELP IMMEDIATELY!!**

Students not experiencing an emergency or crisis situation but are experiencing any of the above signs or symptoms and would like professional assistance are encouraged to go to Room 144 South Hall or call 1-570-662-4436 or 1-570-662-4695.

For staff and faculty affected by mental health concerns, the SEAP (State Employee Assistance Program) is a comprehensive program available to faculty and staff. The SEAP provides licensed professional counselors to listen and:

- Help define the problem clearly
- Assess the type of help needed
- Either provide the required help or make the most appropriate, cost-effective referrals

The SEAP specialists can assist with:

- Stress, depression and anxiety
- Marital relationships and family/parenting issues
- Work conflicts
- Legal and financial issues
- Time management
- Parenting and adoption
- Anger, grief and loss
- Substance abuse
- Eldercare and childcare

For more information, log onto <http://www.passhe.edu/inside/HR/syshr/Pages/SEAP.aspx> or [mansfield.edu/hr](http://mansfield.edu/hr) and click the benefits tab.

## **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF AND SIGNS OF DISTRESS**

While these are not necessarily symptoms of a crisis, if you are experiencing any of the following, it may be beneficial to seek help.

- restless or broken sleep for a period of several days
- lack of energy
- feeling tired most of the time
- diminished appetite
- feeling "not yourself"
- feeling stressed
- unusual irritability
- feeling sad, blue, or down
- restlessness during waking hours
- inability to concentrate

Again, this is not a complete listing of symptoms you may experience. If you have any reason at all to suspect that you may be depressed or in need of counseling, please contact the Counseling Center as soon as possible.

The following procedure will be followed by Mansfield University in the event of an acutely distressed or suicidal student.

### **PROCEDURE**

#### **Safety Protocol-Responding to the Acutely Distressed or Suicidal Student**

1. **Identification of at-risk students.** The University's Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) will develop and provide education on identifying at-risk students to students, students' parents, staff, and faculty. Training may be provided in person or online and in forums such as orientation, first year seminar courses, University Days, department meetings, and other appropriate venues. The goal is to train as many constituents as possible on the identification of at-risk students.
2. **Procedure once a student is identified.** The Counseling Center will be notified of the at-risk student and will complete an assessment of the student as soon as possible. While notifications may come from any source, Campus Police will contact the Director of the Counseling Center of any mental health issues of which they are aware that occur on campus. Campus Police will also encourage local police departments to notify them of any at-risk situations involving University students. The Counseling Center will make appropriate referrals based on their assessment of the individual situation.
3. **Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or other agreements with community providers.** Working collaboratively with the BIT, the Director of the Counseling Center will explore the development of MOUs with identified community providers related to at-risk students.

## **Voluntary or Involuntary Psychiatric Hospitalization**

1. **MOUs with hospital receiving students.** Working collaboratively with the BIT, the Director of the Counseling Center will explore the development of MOUs with identified voluntary or involuntary psychiatric hospital providers.
  - a. **Transportation responsibility.** When transportation is needed for inpatient assessment, a decision regarding the appropriate transporter will be made by Campus Police and the Counseling Center. If a suicide attempt has been made, ambulance transportation will occur. In cases of threats to campus community, secure Campus Police transportation will occur. In all other cases the University will do all that is possible to find appropriate transportation to the health care facility.
2. **Non-hospitalization options for students requiring close supervision.** The Counseling Center will attempt to follow-up with students following an assessment resulting in non-hospitalization.
3. **Re-entry after hospitalization.** The Counseling Center is notified by the hospital provider of the student's release from care. The Counseling Center staff will communicate with appropriate personnel of the student's return, sharing the least amount of information as possible. Notification of faculty will occur as any return from an absence is handled.

## **Post-crisis Follow-up Plan**

1. **Best interests of student and community.** Mansfield University strives to put students' best interests first and providing any additional resources, assistance, training and awareness programs to better serve the campus community.
2. **Follow-up with those involved with/affected by distressed or suicidal student.**
  - a. If incident occurs on campus inside the residence halls, the lead staff professional in the office of Student Living, working with the Resident Directors and the Resident Assistants will follow-up with individuals affected while closely working with the Director of Counseling Services.
  - b. If an incident occurs outside of the Residence Halls or off campus, the Director of the Counseling Center, the Dean of Students and Chief of Campus Police will work with the Behavioral Intervention Team in determining who would be providing the follow up assistance to those affected by distressed or suicidal student.

## **Documentation of Encounters with Acutely Distressed or Suicidal Student**

1. **Guidelines for what should be documented and where.**
  - a. Counseling Center Protocols making sure HIPA guidelines are followed.

- b. Information Report through the Office of Student Conduct on the Adirondack Solutions Database of MyConductCoordinator (only visible to the Dean of Students and the Community Conduct Officer).
  - c. Mansfield University Campus Police documentation procedures followed by the direction of the Campus Chief of Police
2. **Ensuring appropriate information is consistently documented.** The Director of the Counseling Center will work with all areas on campus that require documentation of emergency incidents making sure all appropriate information is consistently documented and in a secure location.

### Other Related Safety Issues

1. **Participation in study abroad; off campus practicum.** Advisor, Chaperone or Faculty/Staff member contacts local emergency services (9-1-1 in United States; 112 for any country in the European Union) to Assist distressed student. Directly contacting the Director of the Counseling Center and the Dean of Students regarding the incident. The Director of the Counseling Center and the Dean of Students will work with the BIT in contacting all appropriate individuals on campus.
2. **International students.** Director of the International Student Center is the point of contact for any distressed international students and should be in direct communication with the Director of the Counseling Center and the Dean of Students.
3. **Sayre and other distance education students.** In the event of a situation that warrants the intervention of a member of the Counseling Center faculty after office hours, the following procedure is to be followed. An “on call” system is in effect. The phone numbers listed are the “crisis cell phone” number and the counselors home phone number. The cell phone is with the counselor for the time they are “on call” after the counseling center closes. **If there is an emergency during office hours, please call the Counseling Center at 570-662-4695.**

**If the counselor on- call cannot be reached, please call their personal cell or home number listed.** *PLEASE DO NOT GIVE OUT PERSONAL CELL OR HOME NUMBERS TO ANYONE ELSE*

The following work day, or when reasonable, please contact Jolene Meisner, Director of Counseling Services, to discuss the incident. An email will suffice.

The option always exists of calling **Crisis Intervention at 877-724-7142 or 911.**

If there is concern that an overdose is possible, the individual has cut themselves and medical attention is necessary, there is a physical or sexual assault, or the student is in physical pain, contact 911 for an ambulance and notify Campus Police to have the student transported to the Emergency Room. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE SHOULD YOU TRANSPORT THE INDIVIDUAL YOURSELF.**

Contact with the counselor on call should be made by Campus Police, Residence Directors or other individuals who can give appropriate and adequate information on the incidence. Include name, location of the individual and details of the event. Simply giving out the on-call number to a concerned individual is not appropriate. Generally, intervention is not done with an individual who is intoxicated or otherwise impaired. Please feel free to contact any member of the Counseling Center for suggestions on helping students.

The Counseling Center will be open during the Fall 2019 semester Monday-Thursday 8:30am- 5:00pm and Friday 9:00am -4:00pm. Students who wish to see a counselor immediately should be told to make the assistant answering the phone aware of this fact. An appointment will be made with the first available counselor for that day.

**Steps to Restrict Access to Lethal Means of Self-Harm.** Campus Police with the assistance and recommendations from the Counseling Center will take all appropriate steps in restricting access to any means of self-harm. Campus Police will confiscate any items that may be deemed a threat to the distressed student and/or campus community.

**Speaking to the Media About Student Mental Health.** American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) guideline adherence found at [afsp.org](http://afsp.org). The University Director of Marketing and Communications is the direct contact in speaking with the media regarding any incidents that occur on campus.

### **Emergency Contact Notification**

1. **Notification of emergency contact.** Emergency occurring in the residence halls, contact would be made by Director of Student Living or Resident Director on Duty. Emergency occurring outside of the Residence Halls or Off-Campus, emergency contact would be made by the Dean of Students or by their Designee
2. **Deciding to involuntarily notify emergency contact.** Director of the Counseling Center would make the determination if an involuntary emergency notification would be made.
3. **Engaging emergency contact who may be in denial about seriousness of situation.** University or on-call counselor would speak in regards to the situation while still respecting confidentiality. On-call professional university staff may also speak with emergency contact and provide resources and contact information of the Counseling Center.

### **Leave of Absence or Re-entry Protocol**

1. **Determining if involuntary leave is in student's best interests.** The Director of Counseling Services will work with Campus Police and the Dean of Students Office determining if involuntary leave of absence is in the student's best interest. BIT will meet following a decision to plan follow-up and next steps of re-entry at the University.
2. **Planning re-entry for student returning from leave.** A letter from a licensed



trained counseling professional (on campus or off) recommending reinstatement to the institution must be delivered to the Counseling Center. Director of the Counseling Center will then work with the BIT in next steps of reinstatement, if approved.

3. **Communication with student, emergency contact, campus personnel about a leave of absence.** The Registrar's Office, in consultation with the Counseling Center will be the point of contact regarding communication with campus personnel and the student.

In the event of a confirmed suicide of a student, faculty member or staff member, the University will make support services readily available and will communicate directly with students, faculty and staff. The Dean of Students will work in conjunction with Mansfield's Director of Marketing and Communications to share information to the extent possible.

### **DISTRIBUTION**

This policy will be posted to the Policies and Procedures web page and will be included in the Policies section of the current undergraduate catalog.