



Suicide Prevention and Response Plan

As required by House Bill No. 1354, Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 7, Part 1, is amended by adding the following as a new section:

- a) Each state institution of higher education shall develop and implement a suicide prevention plan for students, faculty, and staff. The plan must be developed in consultation with campus mental health professionals and suicide prevention experts. The plan must identify procedures related to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.
- b) Each state institution of higher education may seek assistance in the development of a suicide prevention plan from an organization that engages in a variety of initiatives to improve crisis services and advance suicide prevention, such as the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network or a successor organization, and may seek information from such an organization for information on the development of training programs pursuant to 63-1-125(c)(1).
- c) Each state institution of higher education shall provide the suicide prevention plan to students, faculty, and staff at least one (1) time each semester.

Table of Contents

Quick Reference Guide	3
Campus Policy/Plan Implementation, Publication, and Distribution	4
Prevention	4
Reduction of Means	4
Student Suicide Prevention Education and Programming	4
Staff and Faculty Suicide Prevention Education and Programming	5
Intervention	6
Assessment	6
Response and Referral	7
Postvention	11
Community Resources	13
Appendix	14

Quick Reference Guide

MTSU Counseling Services

- Students can walk-in or call (615) 898-2670 to schedule a same-day screening appointment with a licensed staff counselor.
- We also offer groups, “Let’s Talk,” which is a drop-in, first-come, first-served service available from 2 – 4 pm on weekdays. Students can speak informally with a counselor for 30 minutes. More info: <https://mtsu.edu/counseling/lets-talk.php>
- Services are free and available to currently enrolled students.
- To learn more about all our services, please visit our website: <https://mtsu.edu/counseling>
- Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- Location: KUC 326-S

MTSU Center for Counseling and Psychological Services

- Training facility affiliated with the Professional Counseling Program at MTSU. Graduate students in the Professional Counseling program provide counseling services to Center clients.
- Services are free for MTSU students and staff; \$10 for community residents.
- Hours: Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday 3:00 – 8:00 pm.
- Location: 503 East Bell Street in the MTSU Miller Education Center
- The Center currently operates from August through May.
- Phone: (615) 898-2271

CRISIS: 911 from a campus phone or cell

MTSU University Police: 615-898-2424

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 988 (call or text)

Online Chat Option: <https://988lifeline.org/chat/>

TN Crisis Line: 1-855-274-7471 (Available 24 hours every day)

Crisis Text Line: Text TN to 741-741

The Trevor Project: 1-866-488-7386 (LGBTQ sensitive trained counselors)

Veteran’s Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 Press 1

Warm Line: 615-320-0591 (Not 24/7)

Campus Policy/Plan Implementation, Publication, and Distribution

MTSU created a campus-wide Suicide Prevention plan in 2020. The plan is distributed via email to the entire campus community one (1) time each semester. The plan is also available on the University's website at:

<https://www.mtsu.edu/healthservices/PDFs/suicide-prevention.pdf>. This plan will be reviewed and updated annually.

Prevention

According to 2019 data published by the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN), suicide is the second leading cause of death among college-age students. Middle Tennessee State University will initiate suicide prevention measures to proactively address the increasing prevalence of suicide and suicide attempts in this at-risk age group.

- **Reduction of Means:** Reducing access to the methods by which suicide may occur is an essential component of prevention. The Harvard Injury Control Research Center has reviewed dozens of research studies demonstrating that, under certain circumstances, decreasing access to lethal means of suicide also decreases the suicide deaths in a given area (<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter>). This is particularly true for reducing access to higher lethality means, such as firearms. Information provided as part of MTSU's suicide prevention plan addresses:
 - MTSU Policy 705 Weapons on Campus: Both the Office of Student Conduct and University Police apply this policy to all campus constituents, including visitors, faculty/staff, and students. The policy can be found at: <https://www.mtsu.edu/policies/campus-health-safety-security/705.php>
 - Drug Take-Back Days: Regularly purging medicine cabinets of prescription medications that are no longer needed or expired (in an environmentally safe manner) can reduce the accessibility of medication that could be used for a drug overdose. MTSU Campus Pharmacy hosts a Drug Take-Back Day every fall and spring semester to reduce the availability of prescription medications by collecting expired, unused, and unwanted medications. The event is open to both the MTSU campus community and the public.
 - MTSU's Campus Planning Master Plan: The MTSU Campus Planning Master Plan, which guides the university's long-term growth and expansion, will take into consideration architectural and physical barriers for buildings or bridges

during future construction planning to minimize the potential for suicide by jumping.

- **Student Suicide Prevention Education and Programming:**

- September National Suicide Prevention Month Programming: Programs to increase mental health awareness and reduce mental health stigma, which often can prevent individuals from seeking help, are offered during the month of September, which is National Suicide Prevention month, as well as at other times throughout the academic year.
- Student Training Upon Request: Suicide prevention training is also facilitated at the request of a department, student organization, or through additional programming. To request a training or presentation, contact MTSU Counseling Services at (615) 898-2670.
- Online Training and Resources: Online resources and training are available through the Counseling Services website:
 - <https://mtsu.edu/counseling>
 - <https://www.mswdegrees.org/resources/suicide-depression>

- **Staff and Faculty Suicide Prevention Education and Programming:**

- University Police: The University Police Department requires officers to participate in training that prepares them to interact with and assess individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Residence Life: Residence Life staff receive suicide prevention training annually before the start of each fall semester. Licensed mental health professionals from MTSU Counseling Services conduct the training. The training covers the following: suicide risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, and postvention.
- Training Upon Request: Suicide prevention training is provided at the request of a department, student organization, or through additional programming. To request a training or presentation, contact MTSU Counseling Services at (615) 898-2670.
- Online Training and Resources: Online resources and training are available through the MTSU Counseling Services website under Faculty Resources:
 - <https://mtsu.edu/counseling>
 - <http://counseling.mtsu.edu/wpcontent/uploads/sites/51/2024/08/crisis-plan.pdf>

- <https://www.mswdegrees.org/resources/suicide-depression>

Intervention

1. Assessment

A student may be identified as potentially suicidal if any of the following warning signs are present:

SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

- Talking about suicide, death, and/or no reason to live
- Preoccupation with death and dying
- Withdrawal from friends and/or social activities
- Experience of a recent severe loss (especially a relationship) or the threat of a significant loss
- Experience or fear of a situation of humiliation or failure
- Drastic changes in behavior
- Loss of interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- Preparation for death by making out a will (unexpectedly) and final arrangements
- Giving away prized possessions
- Previous history of suicide attempts, as well as violence and/or hostility
- Unnecessary risks; reckless and/or impulsive behavior
- Loss of interest in personal appearance
- Increased use of alcohol and/or drugs
- General hopelessness
- Recent experience of humiliation or failure
- Unwillingness to connect with potential helpers

Feelings, Thoughts, and Behaviors

Nearly everyone, at some time in their life, thinks about suicide. Most everyone decides to live because they come to realize that the crisis is temporary, but death is not. On the other

hand, people in the midst of a crisis often perceive their dilemma as inescapable and feel an utter loss of control. Frequently, they:

- Can't stop the pain
- Can't think clearly
- Can't make decisions
- Can't see any way out
- Can't sleep, eat, or work
- Can't get out of the depression
- Can't make the sadness go away
- Can't see the possibility of change
- Can't see themselves as worthwhile
- Can't get someone's attention
- Can't seem to get control

To learn more about warning signs, see Appendix A.

2. Response and Referral

Responding to an acutely distressed or potentially suicidal student:

If you, or someone you know, is considering suicide, call 9-1-1 or the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988.

If you are with the individual, do not leave them alone. Stay with them until help arrives.

Welfare Protocol: MTSU will utilize the Welfare Protocol published by the TN Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Minimal Standards of Care document:

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/mentalhealth/documents/TN_Crisis_Services_2017_Minimal_Standards_of_Care.pdf

Use of Wellness Checks: A “Wellness Check” or “Welfare Check” is a request made to law enforcement to check on a particular person whose well-being is of concern. “Wellness checks” can often be an appropriate response, particularly when it is unclear whether a person has caused harm to themselves; however, there are times when a wellness check in the absence of a behavioral health professional is ineffective in

alleviating the crisis and fails to meet the behavioral health needs of the individual involved. Law enforcement officers are not equipped to make decisions regarding the need for treatment. The initiation of a wellness check for a behavioral health condition should not be conducted in the absence of behavioral health professional involvement without imminent risk. If law enforcement has determined the presence of imminent risk, further responsibilities for accessing service remain with the officer involved. If a crisis service provider requests law enforcement to perform a wellness check on an individual with a suspected behavioral health condition, there will be a coordinated response with a behavioral health professional and/or a mechanism for ensuring follow-up by a clinician.

When working with law enforcement, the following information should be obtained during the wellness checks:

- Are there weapons in the home?
- How is the person behaving?
- Is the individual present in the residence?
- For children and youth, is there adult supervision present?

If you are concerned about a student's mental health and well-being, MTSU Counseling Services is available for professional consultation to faculty, staff, students, parents, and family members to help in developing strategies for how best to assist students experiencing emotional distress. For consultation, please call (615) 898-2670.

Responding to a potentially suicidal student who does not appear to be in urgent crisis:

Encourage the student to come to Counseling Services and provide the student with the following information:

On-Campus Resources

MTSU Counseling Services

Students can walk-in or call (615) 898-2670 or book online at: <https://counseling.mtsu.edu/> to schedule a same-day screening appointment with a licensed staff counselor. We also offer groups, "Let's Talk," which is a drop-in, first come, first serve service available from 2 – 4 pm weekdays. Students can utilize this service to speak informally with a counselor for 30 minutes. Here is the link for more info about Let's Talk: <https://mtsu.edu/counseling/lets-talk.php>

Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Location: KUC 326-S

Phone: 615 898-2670

MTSU Center for Counseling and Psychological Services

Training facility affiliated with the Professional Counseling Program at MTSU. Graduate students provide counseling services under the supervision of licensed mental health professionals.

Services are free for MTSU students and staff; \$10 for community residents.

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday 3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. The Center currently operates from August through May.

Location: 503 East Bell Street in the MTSU Miller Education Center (MEC)

Phone: (615) 898-2271

The Care Team

The CARE Team, housed within the Office of Student Care and Conduct (OSCC), serves as a centralized resource to coordinate support for students. It provides proactive assistance by assessing, evaluating, and responding to referrals.

Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Location: KUC 208

Phone: (615)-898-2750

1-on-1 Wellness Coaching

Work with a wellness coach on time management and/or stress management issues. This service is available to students through MTSU Health Promotions, a division of Health Services

Location: Adjacent to the atrium inside the Health, Wellness, and Recreation Center

Request an appointment online at: <https://www.mtsu.edu/healthpro/health-coach.php#form>

Therapy Assistance Online – TAO

Therapy Assistance Online (TAO), a free self-help resource available to all MTSU students, faculty, and staff.

To learn more about TAO, visit

<https://thepath.taoconnect.org/local/login/home.php>.

Use your mtmail address to create a free and private account at

<https://us.taoconnect.org/signup-options>

After-Hour Resources

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 988 (call or text)

Online Chat Option: <https://988lifeline.org/chat/>

TN Crisis Line: 1- 855-274-7471 (Available 24 hours every day)

Crisis Text Line: Text TN to 741-741

The Trevor Project: 1-866-488-7386 (LGBTQ sensitive trained counselors)

Veteran's Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 Press 1

Warm Line: 615-320-0591

- The Warm Line is a resource for people who are not at the point of thinking they might harm themselves but would like to talk with a trained mental health responder.

If a student has articulated suicide intent and refuses help, a Welfare Check can be requested by contacting the local police, or if the student is living on campus, contact University Police at (615) 898-2424.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA does not extend to observable behavior a student may display in class or elsewhere on campus and should not be an impediment to coordination among instructors, administrators, and University Police.

To respect privacy, the group does not publicize individuals who come to the attention of the committee.

If you are aware of a student of concern, contact Dr. Mary Kaye Anderson (or designee) in Counseling Services at (615) 898-2670.

To learn more about how to respond to someone who may be suicidal, see Appendix B.

Postvention

The purpose of this plan is to provide a protocol for postvention following a suicide attempt or a death by suicide within the MTSU community. Postvention involves a series of planned interventions with those affected by a recent suicide to aid in the grieving and adjustment process, stabilize the environment, reduce the risk of negative behaviors, and limit the risk of further suicides through contagion. This collaborative campus and community effort uses a timely approach to respond to trauma and grief reactions.

The initial phase of carrying out a postvention plan involves creating a postvention team. This team consists of the Vice President for Student Affairs, the CARE Team, the Counseling Services Director, and, when appropriate, the staff or faculty associated with the student. The postvention team's response will depend on how the information unfolds over time.

1. Response to a Suicide Attempt
 - a. If you learn a student is attempting suicide, you should immediately notify the police. If the incident is occurring on-campus, contact the MTSU Police Department at 615-898-2424.
 - b. If the incident is occurring off-campus, contact 9-1-1.
2. Issues of confidentiality do not apply when a person's life is in danger. A suicide attempt often constitutes a medical emergency (e.g., bleeding from self-injury, confusion, or coma from drug overdose).
3. If the attempt occurs on campus and is discovered by MTSU Housing and Residence Life staff, they should follow departmental guidelines.
4. The MTSU Police Department will notify:
 - a. emergency medical personnel, if needed
 - b. MTSU Counseling Services.
5. In some cases, to ensure the student's or others' safety, a police officer may be required to take the student into custody and transport them to the hospital for evaluation. These circumstances include violence, serious injury, or conduct likely to result in immediate serious harm to the student or others.
6. If a student is not experiencing a medical emergency but is having an emotional crisis during business hours, an MTSU counselor will conduct an evaluation at the

Counseling Services location (KUC 326S). If hospitalization is warranted, a police officer may provide transportation.

7. In the event of a suicide attempt, the postvention team will:
 - a. Gather the facts.
 - b. Determine which students will likely be most affected by the attempt.
 - c. Provide psychoeducational resources, such as the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) brochures, "Supporting Your Loved One After a Suicide Attempt," which can be accessed through Counseling Services.
8. In the event of a student's death by suicide, the postvention team will:
 - a. Gather the facts.
 - b. Consider how severely the death is likely to impact students.
 - c. Determine which students are most likely affected.
 - d. Prevent (or at least limit the risk of) further suicides and imitative suicidal behaviors.
 - e. Stabilize the campus community, restore a semblance of order and routine, and help the community return to its pre-crisis level of functioning.
 - f. Prepare and implement the postvention response.
9. MTSU Counseling Services Protocol internal postvention protocol following a student's death by suicide on campus include:
 - a. Support the campus community by offering group debriefings and individual sessions to help students process and cope with the immediate loss.
 - a. Temporarily extend office hours to provide students with after-hours access to a counselor at designated on-campus locations. Specific times and locations will be shared via email by a member of the postvention team.
 - b. Reach out to campus and community resources/partners to help provide support for the impacted students.
 - c. Provide support to affected classes and/or departments through facilitated discussions.

Emergency Contact Notification Procedure

After assessing the immediate crisis situation, if it is determined that a student poses an immediate threat to themselves or someone else, an emergency contact may be notified. This contact, as entered in Pipeline or on a Housing and Residential Life medical card, can then be involved in the appropriate response and subsequent treatment plan for the student.

Depending on the point of contact with the University, this notification may be made by the Dean of Students, Counseling Services, Housing & Residential Life, Student Conduct, University Police, or another directly involved campus department.

Once notified of the University's concern, the emergency contact is expected to be actively involved in the treatment and care of the student until the student is medically able to return to the University.

Community Resources

Murfreesboro Survivors of Suicide Loss: (615) 244-7444 (24/7)

Alive Hospice Grief Support: <https://www.alivehospice.org/care/grief-support/>

Internet Support:

Parents of Suicides (POS) – Friends and Families of Suicides (FFOS): www.pos-ffos.com

Faces of Suicide: www.facesofsuicide.com

The Suicide Memorial Wall: www.suicidememorialwall.com

Other Resources:

After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools: <https://afsp.org/after-a-suicide-a-toolkit-for-schools/>

Facebook Guidelines on Reporting Online Suicidal Activity

Alliance of Hope for Suicide Loss Survivors

Resources for Loss Survivors from 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

ReportingonSuicide.org

National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention Framework for Successful Messaging

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

<https://www.tspn.org/grief-after-suicide>

<https://www.alivehospice.org/care/grief-support/>

<https://jedfoundation.org/mental-health-resource-center/>

Appendix A: SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

The following behavioral patterns may indicate a possible risk for suicide and should be watched closely. If they appear numerous or severe, seek professional help at once.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988 provides access to trained telephone counselors, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting TN to 741 741.

Suicide Warning Signs

Talk

If a person talks about:

- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Experiencing unbearable pain
- Having no reason to live
- Killing themselves

Mood

People who are considering suicide often display one or more of the following moods:

- Depression
- Loss of interest
- Rage
- Irritability
- Humiliation
- Anxiety

Behavior

Specific things to look out for include:

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online for materials or means
- Acting recklessly
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from family and friends
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away prized possessions
- Aggression

Appendix B: Response and Referral

There is no typical suicide victim. No age group, ethnicity, or background is immune. Fortunately, many troubled individuals display behaviors, deliberately or inadvertently, that signal their suicidal intent. Recognizing the warning signs and learning what to do next may help save a life.

What Do You Do?

1. Be aware. Learn the warning signs listed above.
2. Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
3. Ask if s/he is thinking about suicide.
4. Be direct. Talk openly and freely about suicide.
5. Be willing to listen. Allow for expressions of feelings and accept those feelings.
6. Be non-judgmental. Avoid debating whether suicide is right or wrong, whether someone's feelings are good or bad, or the value of life.
7. Avoid taunting the person or daring him/her to "do it."
8. Avoid giving advice by making decisions for someone else to tell them to behave differently.
9. Avoid asking "why." This only encourages defensiveness.
10. Offer empathy, not sympathy.
11. Avoid acting shocked. This creates distance.
12. Do not keep someone else's suicidal thoughts (or your own) a secret. Get help; silence can be deadly.
13. Offer hope that alternatives are available. Avoid offering easy reassurance; it only proves you do not understand.
14. Take action. Remove anything that the person could use to hurt themselves means. Get help from individuals or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

Who Can You Talk To?

- A community mental health agency
- A private therapist
- A school counselor or psychologist
- A family physician
- A suicide prevention/crisis intervention center
- A religious/spiritual leader

If you or someone you know is severely depressed or actively suicidal, call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988. Trained counselors in your area are standing by to provide you with the help you need.

Appendix C: Student Crisis Plan

Assisting Students in Distress

As faculty members, you may be the first to notice a student who is experiencing difficulty. Often, there are indicators that a student is experiencing distress long before a situation escalates to a crisis. To assist our students in maintaining their mental health and maximizing their intellectual growth, it is important to identify difficulties as early as possible. The presence of one of the following indicators alone does not necessarily mean that the student is experiencing severe distress. However, the more indicators you notice, the more likely it is that the student needs help.

I AM *true*
BLUE

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY


Academic Indicators	Physical Indicators	Psychological Indicators	Safety Risk Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden decline in quality of work and grades • Repeated absences • Disorganized performance • Multiple requests for extensions • Overly demanding of faculty and staff time and attention • Bizarre content in writings or presentations • You find yourself doing more personal rather than academic counseling during office hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marked changes in physical appearance including deterioration in grooming • Excessive fatigue/sleep disturbance • Intoxication, hangovers, or smelling of alcohol • Disoriented or "out of it" • Tangential, disconnected, or slurred speech • Behavior is out of context or bizarre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-disclosure of personal distress such as family problem, financial difficulties, contemplating suicide, grief • Unusual/disproportional emotional responses to events • Excessive tearfulness, panic reactions • Irritability or unusual apathy • Expressions of concerns about the student by his/her peers • Delusions and paranoia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unprovoked anger or hostility • Physical violence (shoving, grabbing, assault) • Implying or making a direct threat to harm self or others • Stalking or harassing • Communicating threats via email, correspondence, text, or phone calls

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Faculty members may be unsure if sharing student information is a violation of FERPA. The obligation to protect students' privacy is waived in emergency situations. Additionally, observations of a student's conduct or statements made by a student are not part of student's educational record and do not fall under FERPA. Relevant information can be shared with appropriate school officials even when it is not an emergency but there is concern about a student's well-being.



The CARE Team (Campus Action Response and Engagement), housed within the Office of Student Care and Conduct (OSCC), serves as a centralized resource to support students in distress. The Care Team offers proactive assistance by assessing, evaluating, and responding to referrals. To refer a student, visit <https://care-conduct.mtsu.edu> and submit an online referral.

Appendix C: Student Crisis Plan (Continued)



CRISIS PLAN

Assisting Students in Distress

Response Protocol

Follow the chart to determine whom to contact when faced with a distressed or distressing student.

“Yes”

The student's conduct is clearly and imminently reckless, disorderly, dangerous, or threatening including self-harm behavior.

↓

Call 911 or
MTSU Police
(615) 898-2424

“I’m Not Sure”

The student shows signs of distress but I am unsure how serious it is. My interaction has left me feeling uneasy and/or concerned about the student.

↓


During Business Hours:
Call Counseling Services
for consultation
(615) 898-2670

“No”

I am not concerned for the student's immediate safety, but he/she is having significant academic and/or personal issues and could use some support.

↓

Refer the Student
to an appropriate
campus resource;
see options to the
right.



Remember to also take care of You

Helping a distressed student can be mentally and emotionally draining. MTSU's confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers free counseling to university employees (up to 5 sessions annually). Call 1-855-437-3486 to utilize this benefit.

Campus Resources	
University Police	615-898-2424
Counseling Services	615-898-2670
Center for Counseling & Psychological Services*	615-898-2271
Health Services	615-898-2988
Title IX Office	615-898-2185
Disability & Access Center	615-898-2783
Housing & Residential Life	615-898-2971
Career Development	615-898-2500
June Anderson Center	615-898-5812
MT One Stop	615-898-2111
Office of Student Conduct	615-898-2750
TRiO	615-898-5443
Veteran Center	615-904-8347

Community Resources	
National Suicide Prevention Line	988
TN Crisis Line	1-855-274-7471
Crisis Text Line	Text TN to 741-741
Domestic Violence Hotline	615-896-2012
Sexual Assault Hotline	615-494-9262
Trevor Lifeline (LGBTQ+)	1-866-488-7386

*CCPS is a training site affiliated with MTSU's Professional Counseling Program. Supervised graduate students provide counseling services free of charge to MTSU students and staff. If a student falls under the “I’m Not Sure” category, reach out to MTSU Counseling Services for consultation.