



## **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 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.

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## 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 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://www.mtsu.edu/countest/lets-talk.php>
- Services are free and available to currently enrolled students.
- To learn more about all our services, please visit our website: <https://www.mtsu.edu/countest/counseling.php>
- Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- Location: KUC 326-S
- (615) 898-2670

### 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 campus phone or cell  
MTSU University Police: 615-898-2424

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

**Crisis Text Line:** Text TN to 741-741

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1-800-273-TALK (8255) (Available 24 hours every day and routes to local hotlines everywhere)

Online Chat Option: <https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>

**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/institute suicide prevention measures in an effort 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 (Marzuk, Leon, Tardiff, Morgan, Stajic, & Mann, 1992).

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 which includes 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 drug overdose. MTSU Campus Pharmacy hosts a Drug Take-Back Day every fall and spring semester to reduce prescription medications by collecting expired, unused, and unwanted medications. The event is open to both the MTSU campus community and 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:**

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training: Mental Health First Aid is available to students. The 8-hour course teaches how to identify, understand, and help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. This training is free to the MTSU campus community through a federal grant applied for by MTSU's Center for Health and Human Services (CHHS). Information about upcoming MHFA trainings will be distributed by email and students can also register for MHFA training at the following website: <https://www.mtsu.edu/chhs/MentalHealthFirstAid.php>

September National Suicide Prevention Month Programing: 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 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://www.mtsu.edu/countest/counseling.php>  
<https://www.learnpsychology.org/suicide-depression-student-guidebook/>

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

University Police: University Police Department requires officers to participate in training that that prepares them to interact with and assess an individual experiencing a mental health crisis.

Residence Life: Residence Life staff receives suicide prevention training annually prior to 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.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training: Mental Health First Aid is available to faculty and staff. The 8-hour course teaches how to identify, understand, and help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. This training is free to the MTSU campus community through a federal grant applied for by MTSU's Center for Health and Human Services (CHHS). Information about upcoming MHFA trainings will be

distributed by email and students can also register for MHFA training at the following website: <https://www.mtsu.edu/chhs/MentalHealthFirstAid.php>

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://www.mtsu.edu/countest/counseling.php>  
<https://www.mtsu.edu/countest/documents/crisis-plan.pdf> (Appendix C)  
<https://www.learnpsychology.org/suicide-depression-student-guidebook/>

## 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 his or her 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 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

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](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 himself or herself; 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 involved officer. 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 come to Counseling Services and provide the student the following information:



## **On-Campus Resources**

### 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 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://www.mtsu.edu/countest/lets-talk.php>
- Services are free and available to currently enrolled students.
- To learn more about all our services, please visit our website: <https://www.mtsu.edu/countest/counseling.php>
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- 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)
- (615) 898-2271

### 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>

### Therapy Assistance Online – TAO

- Therapy Assistance Online (TAO), a free self-help resource available to all MTSU students, faculty, and staff. TAO is a self-paced interactive web-based program that provides guided activities to help overcome anxiety,

depression, and other common concerns. 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://thepath.taoconnect.org/local/self\\_help/signup.php](https://thepath.taoconnect.org/local/self_help/signup.php)

## **After-Hour Resources**

Crisis Text Line: Text TN to 741741

Mobile Crisis Line of Rutherford County: 1-800-704-2651 (Available 24 hours every day)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) (Available 24 hours every day and routes to local hotlines everywhere)

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 if someone is not to 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 Student Assistance Coordinating Committee (SACC)

The SACC is a resource and point of contact at Middle Tennessee State University for administrators, faculty, staff, and members of the campus community who are dealing with individuals who may be distressed, depressed, disruptive, or otherwise problematic. The SACC fosters collaboration between administrators and members of the campus community.

The members of SACC meet once a month (or more often as needed) to consult on referred individuals and may subsequently make referrals to appropriate campus or community resources. Members include representatives from Counseling Services, Dean of Students, Disability & Access Center, Housing & Residential Life, Student Conduct, Office of the Provost, University Police, Student Health Services, and University Counsel.

The goal of the committee is to get a student of concern the resources and support needed to be successful. The SACC is not a treatment or disciplinary body. The committee's purpose is to provide support, information, and

referrals to those dealing with students of concern and to coordinate responses among participating campus departments.

### 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**

It is important to note that effective suicide postvention is also an effective form of suicide prevention. Postvention involves planned interventions for those affected by a recent suicide death to aid in the grief process, stabilize the environment, and reduce the risk of negative behaviors, most notably the risk of contagion. By understanding and appropriately responding to a known suicide or suicide attempt, other at-risk individuals will benefit from the additional supports.

The first step in executing a postvention plan is to form a postvention team. When appropriate, staff associated with the student will comprise the members of the postvention team or the Student Assistance Coordinating Committee (SACC) will comprise the team.

1. In the event a student has attempted suicide, MTSU's postvention team will communicate to:
  - Gather the facts
  - Determine which students will likely be most affected by the attempt
  - Provide psychoeducational resources, which can be accessed through Counseling Services to supply American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) brochures, "Supporting Your Loved One After a Suicide Attempt"
  
2. In the event of a student's death by suicide, MTSU's postvention team will communicate to:

- Gather the facts
- Consider how severely the death is likely to impact students
- Determine which students will likely be most affected
- Prepare and implement the postvention response

### 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 in the community, an emergency contact, as entered in Pipeline or found a Housing and Residential Life medical card, may be notified so the emergency contact can 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 Counseling Services, Dean of Students, Housing & Residential Life, Student Conduct, University Police, or another directly involved campus department.

Once notified of the University's concern for the student, 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 and Loss Gathering for Young Adults

Alive's Grief Center hosts a monthly gathering for all young adults whose lives have been impacted by a death. This event is FREE, but please RSVP!

Date: First Tuesday of every month

Time: 6:00 p.m. – 7:15 p.m.

Location: Alive Hospice Murfreesboro

629 Williams Drive, Murfreesboro, TN 37219

RSVP: Contact Dianne Castellano, LCSW Grief Counselor  
at [dcastellano@alivehospice.org](mailto:dcastellano@alivehospice.org) or call 615-346-8510

- Internet Support

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

Faces of Suicide: [www.facesofsuicide.com](http://www.facesofsuicide.com)

The Suicide Memorial Wall: [www.suicidememorialwall.com](http://www.suicidememorialwall.com)

## Appendix A: SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

The following behavioral patterns may indicate 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 1-800-273-TALK (8255) 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 on 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 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-237-TALK (8255). 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.



MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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

**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 **Student Assistance Coordinating Committee (SACC)** is a resource and point of contact for all campus members who are concerned about a student’s safety or well being. The committee’s purpose is to provide support, information, and referrals to those working with students of concern, and to coordinate responses among participating campus departments. If you would like to report a student of concern to the committee, contact Dr. Mary Kaye Anderson, Counseling Services, at 615 898-2670.

## Appendix C: Student Crisis Plan (Continued)

# Assisting Students in Distress

### Response Protocol

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

**Is the student a danger to self, or others, or does the student need immediate assistance for any reason?**

**“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	1-800-273-8255
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.