

# Ohio University Guide to Assist Students Who Report Suicidality

## Office of the Dean of Students

### Important Facts

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students. National surveys of college students estimate that 10% of students on any given campus contemplate suicide every year. At Ohio University, if there are about 20,000 students, about 2,000 contemplate suicide each year.

About 80% of college students who die by suicide are unknown to campus mental health professionals. However, about 90% of individuals who die by suicide have a mental disorder that is diagnosable and treatable at the time of their death.

### Warning Signs of Suicide

Suicidality refers to a range of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to contemplating and/or intending to kill oneself, some of which are more observable than others. Warning signs can be organized into two tiers.

#### Tier One Warning Signs

These warning signs include overt expressions of suicidal thinking and elicit the most distress or worry. Warning signs at this tier include someone:

- Threatening to hurt or kill themselves
- Looking for ways to kill themselves, such as seeking access to pills, weapons, or other means
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide (includes social media, handwritten letters, text messages, emails, phone messages)

#### Tier Two Warning Signs

These warning signs include more subtle expressions of suicidal thinking and a broader range of factors that should be taken in combination and in the larger context of the person's natural tendencies and environment. Warning signs at this tier include:

- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feelings of anger, rage, and wanting to seek revenge
- Feeling trapped
- Feeling anxious, irritated, agitated, and having difficulty sleeping
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities
- Using increasing amounts of alcohol and/or drugs
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Displaying dramatic changes in mood, typically over a period of a few days to a few weeks
  - Expressing difficulty finding a reason or purpose for living, such as "I wish this were all over," or "I can't go on like this for much longer."

### What May Trigger Suicidality?

Suicide happens when pain exceeds an individual's resources for coping with pain.

Multiple factors may trigger suicidal ideation and intent. People who are affected by one or more risk factors may have a greater likelihood of suicidal behavior. These risk factors can be used to help identify someone who may be vulnerable to suicide. The following list is not exhaustive, but represents commonly reported risk factors among college students:

#### Mental and Physical Health Factors

- Mental disorders, such as depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, substance misuse, Schizophrenia
- Previous suicide attempts
- Self-injury

#### Individual Factors

- Isolation, hopelessness, anger, impulsivity, risky behavior and other factors mentioned in Tier Two Warning Signs
- Feeling burdensome to others
- Low distress tolerance
- Few or poor coping or problem-solving skills

#### Environmental Factors

- Gender identity concerns
- Sexual assault
- Relationship violence
- Sexual orientation concerns
- Alcohol/drugs
- Suicide of a close person
- Legal problems
- Discrimination
- Other trauma
- Relationship difficulties (e.g. friends, partner, family)

#### Familial Factors

- Family history of suicide or suicidal behavior
- Family history of mental health difficulties
- Current or past family violence or abuse
- Family loss or instability
- Lack of familial support

Females are 3-5 times more likely to attempt suicide. Males are 4-5 times more likely to die by suicide. Suicide does NOT discriminate based on age, race, gender, or sexual orientation. Cultural factors DO play a role in how people respond to a crisis.

# How To Help

## How to Respond to Someone Contemplating Suicide

### ***In response to Tier One Warning Signs***

Contact the Ohio University Police Department (740.593.1911) or Athens Police Department (740.593.6606), if any of the following apply to a distressed student:

- Has a weapon and is threatening to use it
- Threatening immediate harm to self or others
- Has engaged in a behavior that requires immediate medical attention

### ***In response to Tier Two Warning Signs***

- Express care and concern for that individual who is distressed.
- Refer that individual to a trained mental health professional. This may include the following resources on campus:
  - Counseling & Psychological Services (740.593.1616 - available 24/7) [www.ohio.edu/counseling](http://www.ohio.edu/counseling)
  - Counselor-in-Residence Let's Talk Hours are available from Sunday - Thursday, 5-10pm in the Living Learning Center 160 during the academic year.
  - Office of the Dean of Students (740.593.1800) or complete an SRCC referral online at [www.ohio.edu/deanofstudents/reporting.cfm](http://www.ohio.edu/deanofstudents/reporting.cfm)
- Direct an individual to a national hotline if they appear uncomfortable with utilizing on campus resources, or would like additional support. The National Lifeline Number (800.273.TALK).

### **Ask the student directly**

When talking with a student, consider the impact of your language about suicide. Ask the student directly whether they are contemplating suicide. For example, "Are you thinking of killing yourself?" "Are you currently having thoughts of suicide?" "Sometimes when people are experiencing difficult situations, they have thoughts of suicide. Are you?"

Avoid saying "completed suicide" or "committed suicide" so as to not convey a sense of judgment, success, punishment, or other negative tone. Instead, say "die/died by suicide" or "death by suicide."

Be mindful of cultural differences. These differences may influence how willing someone at risk might be to disclose how they are truly feeling.

### **Protective Factors**

In both instances, it may be important to ask briefly about any protective factors that may help the student cope with current distress. Protective factors are those that may reduce the likelihood of suicide and protect students from other risks, such as violence, substance misuse, and academic difficulties. The following list provides some examples of protective risk factors among college students:

### **Intrapersonal Characteristics**

- Psychological/emotional well-being, positive mood, optimism
- Positive beliefs/hope/anticipation about future plans and events
- Desire to finish school
- Internal locus of control (one has an impact on others and the world, and is responsible for one's own accomplishments)
- Adaptive coping skills, including problem-solving and conflict resolution
- Ability to regulate emotions and tolerate distress
- Self-esteem
- Cultural and religious/spiritual beliefs that affirm life, provide fellowship and a sense of purpose and meaning in life
- Physical activity and exercise

### **Interpersonal Characteristics**

- Family support, parental/caregiver involvement
- Support from friends and partners, involvement in social activities
- Involvement in social activities
- Positive role models, mentors, professors, coaches, peers, and others who provide understanding, care, and support
- Sense of connectedness to school and campus/peer community
- Access to care to support one's physical and psychological well-being

If you are concerned about a student's ability to effectively and safely remain on campus, or whether a student's own well-being is impacting the lives of others around them, you may consider making a referral to the Office of the Dean of Students.

### **Additional Information**

It is crucial that people become comfortable asking directly about suicide. Otherwise, a person in distress may say "fine" or "no, I'm not thinking of harming myself," when in reality they have a plan for suicide that would bring them relief or they do not consider that plan as harming oneself.

## Support Resources

### Ohio University Resources

#### Counseling and Psychological Services

Hudson Health Center, 3rd Floor  
740.593.1616

Counseling and Psychological Services provides professional and confidential counseling to students\*. Drop-In hours are 9:45am-3:15pm, M-F. To access counselors who are on-call 24 hours a day, call 740.593.1616. Counseling services are available to all students and consultation services are available to students, faculty, and staff.

[www.ohio.edu/counseling](http://www.ohio.edu/counseling)  
[counseling.services@ohio.edu](mailto:counseling.services@ohio.edu)

\*Counseling is confidential except when there is imminent harm to self or others

#### Bobcats for Suicide Prevention Campaign

Bobcats for Suicide Prevention Campaign is a student group who aims to raise awareness about the threats of suicide to Ohio University students and the general population and to promote healthy living among students.  
[bspc.weebly.com](http://bspc.weebly.com)

#### Campus Care

Hudson Health Center, 1st and 2nd Floor  
740.593.1660  
[www.oucom.ohiou.edu/CampusCare](http://www.oucom.ohiou.edu/CampusCare)

#### Dean of Students Office

345 Baker University Center  
740.593.1800  
[www.ohio.edu/deanofstudents](http://www.ohio.edu/deanofstudents)

#### LGBT Center

354 Baker University Center  
740.593.0239  
[www.ohio.edu/lgbt](http://www.ohio.edu/lgbt)

#### Ohio University Police Department

135 Scott Quadrangle  
911 or 740.593.1911  
[www.ohio.edu/police](http://www.ohio.edu/police)

#### Psychology and Social Work Clinic (PSWC)

002 Porter Hall  
740.593.0902  
[www.ohiopsychology.com/Clinic.html](http://www.ohiopsychology.com/Clinic.html)

#### Student Accessibility Services

348 Baker University Center  
740.593.2620  
[www.ohio.edu/disabilities](http://www.ohio.edu/disabilities)  
[www.disabilities@ohio.edu](mailto:www.disabilities@ohio.edu)

#### Student Review and Consultation Committee

740.593.1800  
SRCC is an advisory and consultative board to help the Dean of Students respond to an expressed concern about a student or to critical, emergency situations involving students. SRCC also serves as conduit to other helpful university and community services. An SRCC referral can be made in person, online, or by contacting the Office of the Dean of Students.  
[www.ohio.edu/deanofstudents/reporting.cfm](http://www.ohio.edu/deanofstudents/reporting.cfm)

## Athens Community Resources

#### Appalachian Behavioral Healthcare

100 Hospital Drive  
740.594.5000  
[mha.ohio.gov/Default.aspx?tabid=187](http://mha.ohio.gov/Default.aspx?tabid=187)

#### Athens County Crisis Hotline

740.593.3344  
Athens County Suicide Prevention Coalition  
[www.317board.org/suicideprevention](http://www.317board.org/suicideprevention)

#### Athens County Suicide Prevention Coalition

[www.317board.org/file/suicideprevention](http://www.317board.org/file/suicideprevention)

#### Athens Police Department

11 North College Street  
24-Hour Dispatch - 740.593.6606 or 740.592.3313  
[www.ci.athens.oh.us/index.aspx?nid=120](http://www.ci.athens.oh.us/index.aspx?nid=120)

#### Holzer Clinic

2131 East State Street  
740.589.3120 or 1.855.4.HOLZER (446.5937)  
[www.holzer.org/locations/hhs-other-clinical-locations/athens](http://www.holzer.org/locations/hhs-other-clinical-locations/athens)

#### O'Bleness Memorial Hospital

55 Hospital Drive  
740.593.5551  
[www.obleness.org](http://www.obleness.org)

#### Hopewell Health Centers

90 Hospital Drive  
740.592.3091 or 740.594.5045  
[www.hopewellhealth.org/](http://www.hopewellhealth.org/)

#### UMA Express Care (University Medical Associates)

265 West Union Street, Suite A  
740.594.2456  
[www.umadoc.com/specialties/express.php](http://www.umadoc.com/specialties/express.php)

## National Resources

#### American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

[www.afsp.org/](http://www.afsp.org/)

#### American Association of Suicidology

[www.suicidology.org/home](http://www.suicidology.org/home)

#### National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Athens: [www.namiathensohio.org](http://www.namiathensohio.org)  
Ohio: [www.namiohio.org](http://www.namiohio.org)  
National: [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

#### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1.800.273.TALK (8255)  
[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

#### Suicide Prevention Resource Center

[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

#### Trans Lifeline:

877.565.8860  
[www.translifeline.org](http://www.translifeline.org)

**Trevor Project** (crisis intervention and suicide prevention for LGBT youth ages 13-24, including online chat and texting support)  
866.488.7386 Text the word "Trevor" to 1.202.304.1200  
[www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

## Bobcats Who Care

Interested in receiving training on suicide prevention? Would you like to become a gatekeeper on campus? Bobcats Who Care is a three-hour, interactive gatekeeper training program designed to help you respond to individuals (students, faculty, staff) in crisis. This training teaches you empathic listening and relationship building skills that help one to talk comfortably with someone who is very depressed and contemplating suicide. Bobcats Who Care training also helps you connect a person in distress to professional support. Bobcats Who Care is based on the belief that all of us who are part of the Ohio University community have a responsibility to look out for one another. This training, and the information provided in this folder, is modeled after Campus Connect, a suicide prevention gatekeeper program developed at Syracuse University and utilized on over 150 college and universities nationwide.

# { Bobcats Who Care }

Ohio University's suicide prevention gatekeeper program.  
*Keeping the Bobcat Family safe.*

**Counseling and Psychological Services**  
740.593.1616

**Student Review and Consultation Committee**  
[www.ohio.edu/deanofstudents/reporting.cfm](http://www.ohio.edu/deanofstudents/reporting.cfm)

**Ohio University Police Department**  
740.593.1911

**Athens Police Department**  
740.592.3313 or 911



**CRISIS TEXT LINE |**

**Text HELLO to 741741**  
Free, 24/7, Confidential



**OHIO**  
UNIVERSITY

**DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**