

Volunteer State Community College Suicide Prevention Plan and Protocol

College students often face significant life changes and may feel overwhelmed by the new challenges and expectations placed on them. Stressors such as lack of sleep, substance use, and the pressures of academic performance can increase the risk of developing suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students.
- Approximately 1,100 college students die by suicide every year.
- 6% of college students report seriously considering suicide in the past year; 90% of those students created a suicide plan, 14% attempted suicide, and 60% continue to have thoughts of suicide (Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network).

Per T.C.A. § 49-7-1, Volunteer State Community College (VSCC) has developed a suicide prevention plan and protocol to improve crisis services and promote mental health and wellness on campus.

Prevention

1. Syllabus Course Handbook/Statement:

- All course syllabi and program handbooks at VSCC will include the following statement:

"Volunteer State Community College is committed to and cares about all students. Support services are available for any individual at VSCC who is experiencing feelings of being overwhelmed, hopelessness, depression, or thoughts of suicide. For immediate help, call 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or use the National Suicide Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Text 'TN' to 741741, or use the Trevor Lifeline at 1-866-488-7386. Veterans can contact the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (press 1) or text 838255."

2. Community Partnerships:

- VSCC has established partnerships with local mental health facilities and organizations such as the **Volunteer Behavioral Health, Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN), CHASCo**, and others to provide suicide prevention education, outreach, and programming.

3. **Training:**

- **Suicide Prevention** training will be provided to faculty, staff, and students, equipping them with skills to recognize warning signs of suicide.

4. **Dissemination of Information:**

- Suicide prevention resources and information will be promoted through campus media, including the **VSCC website, student programming, and flyers/posters.**
- The Student Support office will ensure the plan is communicated each academic term.
- <https://www.volstate.edu/prevention> www.volstate.edu/prevention

Intervention

Suicide Warning Signs:

It is essential to recognize potential warning signs of suicide and take appropriate action. Behavioral patterns that may indicate suicide risk include:

- Talking about suicide, death, or feeling like there is no reason to live.
- Withdrawal from friends and social activities.
- A recent severe loss or fear of failure.
- Drastic changes in behavior, mood, or interest in daily activities.
- Giving away prized possessions or making unexpected final arrangements.

What To Do:

1. Be aware of warning signs.
2. Get involved and show support.
3. Ask directly about suicidal thoughts.
4. Listen without judgment and offer empathy.
5. Act—remove potential means of harm and seek help from professionals.

If a student or staff member is at immediate risk, **Campus Police** must be notified, and the individual should not be left alone.

In non-emergency situations, individuals should contact the Student Support office at 3477, or in an emergency, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at **988**, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, or text **TN to 741741**.

Intervention Protocol

VSCC has established protocols for responding to suicidal students, faculty, or staff. If an individual expresses suicidal intent:

- **Campus Police** will be notified and will remain with the individual until appropriate mental health services arrive or provide transport to a medical facility if immediate assistance is required.
- Incidents should be documented and reported to the **Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT)** for follow-up. <https://www.volstate.edu/students/behavioral-intervention-team>
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Postvention

If a suicide takes place, it affects the entire campus community. VSCC's postvention protocol is designed to stabilize the community, prevent suicide contagion, and provide mental health support for those impacted.

Goals of Postvention:

- Provide resources to grieving individuals.
- Stabilize the campus and restore routine functioning.
- Prevent further suicides and decrease trauma.
- Facilitate emotional processing of grief and loss.

Procedure:

- **Campus Police** will lead the response, confirming the cause of death and coordinating necessary outside resources.
- External resources, such as **Optum**, **Here4TN**, and **ParTNers**, will assist with community recovery efforts.
- Resources for postvention planning can be found in the **Higher Education Mental Health Alliance's** projects guide www.hemha.org for responding to campus suicides.

By implementing this plan, Volunteer State Community College is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment, offering resources to those in need, and fostering mental health and well-being across the entire campus community.

For more information and resources, visit the **VSCC prevention website**: <https://www.volstate.edu/prevention>.

For more information and support contact:

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