

Threatened, Attempted or Completed Suicide Protocol

The University will endeavour to do all that can be reasonably expected to prevent a student from ending his or her life. However, the primary responsibility for this lies with the student concerned. Students who are very distressed are obliged to seek psychological or psychiatric treatment. The Counselling Centre is available to assist students who are contemplating suicide in order to prevent them from carrying out any attempts to end their life and to counsel other students affected by those who have threatened or completed suicide.

The Counselling Centre will operate an after-hours psychological emergencies number during the academic terms so that students are able to reach a psychologist if necessary when the Counselling Centre is closed.

A. Attempted Suicide

1. If a student has injured him or herself or swallowed any substances, this should be treated as a medical emergency and the student should be immediately transported to Settler's Hospital.
2. An ambulance should be called to transport the student to hospital.
3. If the student has a private doctor, the doctor should be called to attend to the student at the casualty department.
4. The doctor on duty at the hospital will decide on whether or not to admit the student. If the student is admitted, it is helpful to stay with the student until he or she is settled in a ward.
5. Admissions are a matter of public record and as this is a life-threatening situation the student's parents or family must be informed as soon as possible by the Warden / Dean of Students / Counselling Centre (preferably with the permission of the student concerned, but without permission if the student is unwilling or unable to give this permission).
6. The Dean of Students should be informed as soon as possible during office hours by the relevant Warden or the Head of the Counselling Centre.

B. Threatened Suicide

1. If a student threatens suicide, the Counselling Centre or on-call Psychologist should be contacted immediately.
2. A Psychologist from the centre will attempt to arrange to meet the student to complete a thorough clinical assessment. Ideally this should be done at the Counselling Centre, the Sanatorium or a University Residence. Psychologists are not expected to make house calls to private residences.
3. The services of the CPU can be utilised when Psychologists are called to assess clients. A Security Officer should be available to escort the Psychologist and wait while the Psychologist completes the assessment / crisis care if this is necessary.

4. It is not always possible to visit the suicidal student. If the student has used the psychological emergencies number and the psychologist is unable to visit the student because this is unsafe, impractical or because the suicidal student will not reveal where he or she is, the psychologist will attempt to do an assessment by telephone and will attempt to locate the student.
5. If it becomes necessary to search for a student on Campus or in the surrounding areas, the assistance of the CPU should be utilised. It may also be necessary to contact the SAPS.
6. If, after doing a psychological assessment, the Psychologist is of the opinion that the student continues to pose a significant suicidal risk, the student should be admitted to Settler's Hospital. In this event the Psychologist will facilitate this admission. Should the student not agree to an assisted or voluntary admission, they should be involuntarily admitted. In exceptional cases, the CPU or SAPS may need to detain and transfer acutely suicidal students, but only after all other efforts are exhausted.
7. The University Residences and the Sanatorium cannot provide adequate supervision for acutely suicidal students. Students who are acutely suicidal should be admitted into hospital for a 72-hour observation period, regardless of whether they have actually harmed themselves or not.
8. Alternatively, if appropriate, the students may be released into the care of their family / parents.
9. In some cases, after a thorough clinical assessment, it may be possible for the Psychologist to resolve the crisis and the student should be allowed to continue with his or her studies and place in residence without interruption. In these cases it is preferable to arrange follow-up care at the Counselling Centre or with the student's Private Psychologist.

C. Return to Campus

1. If a student has been admitted to hospital because they have made a suicide attempt or have been considered a serious risk for making an attempt, they should immediately consult a psychologist at the Counselling Centre once discharged from hospital.
2. The psychologist at the Centre will then do a thorough clinical assessment and ascertain whether
 - the student can continue with his or her studies and return to residence (where applicable) without interruption, subject to particular conditions (e.g. weekly counselling sessions) as determined by the Head of Counselling.
 - the student should be required to take extended leave of absence on medical grounds and discharged into the care of his or her family in order to recover. The period of leave will normally be one semester.

3. The Registrar's Division, the relevant Heads of Department and the Hall Warden will be informed by the DoS of the temporary suspension of the student's registration
4. Any suicidal student, who is released into the care of his parents / guardian and sent home, should be assessed over a period of at least a month by an independent psychologist or psychiatrist to determine whether the student continues to pose a serious risk of suicide. Once the psychologist or psychiatrist is satisfied that the student is stable, not at risk of imminent relapse, likely to adhere to prescribed medication, and does not pose a danger to him or herself, a report based on this assessment should be sent to the Head of the Counselling Centre. The Head of the Counselling Centre will then make a recommendation to the Dean of Students to readmit the student.
5. In such cases, the Head of Counselling will determine the particular conditions under which the student will be permitted to return to residence or campus, and the Dean of Students will convey the decision to the student.
6. The Registrar's Division, the relevant Heads of Department and the Hall Warden will be informed by the DoS of the student's return.
7. The usual arrangements regarding leave of absence can be made when a student is required to take leave on medical grounds. The student can apply for an extended DP if they qualify for this.

D. Completed Suicide

1. In the case when a student ends his or her life, the SAPS / Emergency Services should be contacted immediately via the CPU, as should the Dean of Students.
2. The student's parents / family should be contacted immediately.
3. The Counselling Centre / on-call Psychologist should be informed.
4. The Counselling Centre will be available to offer counselling to students affected by the death.