

Student Suicide Attempts, Threats, or Gestures

Student Affairs Policy STAF 1.07

I. Purpose of the Policy: To provide guidance that outlines an appropriate medical and psychological response to suicide attempts, threats or gestures by students currently enrolled at the Columbia Campus, University of South Carolina.

II: Policy Statements:

- A. The relationship of the University to its students is one which has, as one of its basic purposes, the creation of an environment conducive to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. Since a portion of this relationship involves the interaction between the student's personal welfare and his/her academic achievement, the mental and emotional stability of students is a primary concern for the University.
- B. Students experiencing mental or emotional instability or distress are encouraged to obtain professional assistance from one of the counseling facilities on campus (Counseling and Human Development Center, Psychological Services Center, Student Health Center, University Suicide Center, etc.).
- C. In order to provide for the safety and security of students, and maintain an atmosphere conducive to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, suicide attempts, threats or gestures by students are prohibited.
- D. It is the responsibility of all members of the campus community to support actions and efforts to enhance the mental and emotional stability of students.

III. Procedures:

A. DEFINITIONS: For the purpose of this policy the following terms will be defined as:

1. **Suicide Attempt, Threat or Gesture:** Suicide attempt, threat, or gesture includes those situations in which a person performs a life-threatening behavior with the intent of jeopardizing his/her life or to give the appearance of such intent.
2. **University Official:** Any faculty or staff member employed by the University of South Carolina.

B. UNIVERSITY OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITIES: When a University Official becomes aware of a situation suggesting either a suicide attempt may occur or a suicide attempt, threat, or gesture by a student has occurred, the following procedures should be implemented:

1. If concerned over either the mental or emotional well being of a student or the possibility of a suicide attempt, or if the student has made a suicide threat, the University Official should contact the Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT, 777-4333) and request assistance. If the situation occurs after normal operating hours and immediate assistance is needed, contact 911.
2. If a suicide attempt or gesture has occurred, the University Official should initiate an appropriate medical response:
 - a. Render First Aid or other immediate assistance to the student as possible and needed.
 - b. If a medical emergency exists, contact the Richland County Emergency Medical Service (EMS) by calling 911. An on-campus 911 call will also alert University Police since on-campus 911 calls are made through the University Police Emergency Dispatch Office.
 - c. In medical emergency situations, after making the 911 call, contact the BIT and advise them of the situation. If the incident occurs after normal operating hours, call the 911 and report the suicide attempt or gesture, and request CHDC be notified.
 - d. If no medical emergency exists, immediate physical and psychiatric evaluation and necessary intervention is needed. Initial evaluation is provided on campus by CHDC. To initiate this process during normal operating hours, contact the University Police (777-9111, 777-4215). Advise them of the situation and request assistance. Then contact the BIT (777-4333) and advise them of the situation. After normal operating hours, contact the University Police and request assistance.
 - e. Transportation should be provided by EMS ambulance (for medical emergencies) or by the Health Center vehicle or University Police for non-medical emergencies. The University Official should stay with the student until transport or other assistance arrives. The University Official may be requested by the University Police, CHDC, or other University offices to supply additional information.

C. MANAGEMENT OF STUDENTS FOLLOWING INCIDENTS:

1. Following the incident, the student must spend at least one night in a hospital for observation and/or treatment when recommended by the University Psychiatrist or attending physician.
2. If the student's behavior warrants it, involuntary or voluntary hospitalization at an appropriate medical or mental health facility may be ordered by the University Psychiatrist, or other appropriate attending physician, in accordance with South Carolina State Law.
3. The student must have a follow up evaluation by a member of the CHDC staff or designee regardless of a student's decision to be treated by another provider. This evaluation must occur within five days of the incident or within five days of the student's return to campus if treated off-campus. This time period may be adjusted at the University's discretion.
4. Notification of the student's parents/guardian by BIT or attending Physician may occur when deemed necessary

D. ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT AND POSSIBLE DISCIPLINARY ACTION:

1. A decision regarding the student's continuation at the University will be made using procedures contained in STAF Policy 6.29, Student Mental Health Disturbances and the BIT protocol. The BIT protocol can be found at www.sc.edu/BIT.