



Suicide Prevention Plan | 2026-2027

East Tennessee State University





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In accordance with TCA 49-7-172, “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. Each state institution of higher education shall provide the suicide prevention plan to students, faculty, and staff at least one (1) time each semester.”

This Suicide Prevention Plan was developed by staff in the ETSU Counseling Center and the ETSU Dean of Students office with guidance from the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network, Higher Education Mental Health Alliance, Suicide Prevention Resource Center, JED Foundation, Zero Suicide Institute, and American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Background

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students. Many mental health concerns first present during college, and the rates at which students are endorsing concerns like depression and anxiety have been steadily increasing over the last decade. Despite students being more aware of the resources available to them, not all students will reach out for support. Most students are not receiving services from the Counseling Center, so a comprehensive campus approach to supporting student mental health and well-being is necessary to meet students where they are. Recent trends indicate that students are more likely to seek support from peers and faculty members versus mental health providers, so it is more important than ever for students, faculty, and staff to be well-equipped to navigate conversations around mental health and offer effective support. This Suicide Prevention plan highlights current and anticipated initiatives on campus to support suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

The JED Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention for Colleges and Universities is one of the foundational models for this suicide prevention plan and is shown below.

ETSU is a JED Campus.



Risk Factors

A key component of suicide prevention is awareness of warning signs for distress. It is important to note that not all students will show distress in the same way. This section lists potential indicators that a student is struggling. Please keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive and that other signs may present instead.

ACADEMIC INDICATORS

- Repeated absences from class, section, lab or employment
- Missed assignments, exams or appointments
- Deterioration in quality or quantity of work
- Extreme disorganization or erratic performance
- Written or artistic expression of unusual violence, morbidity, social isolation, despair or confusion; essays or papers that focus on suicide or death (for more information see: Concerns About Writing)
- Continual seeking of accommodations or extensions
- Overblown or disproportionate response to grades or other evaluations

BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL INDICATORS

- Angry or hostile outbursts, yelling, or aggressive comments
- Unusual withdrawal or animated behavior
- Expressions of hopelessness or worthlessness; crying or tearfulness
- Expressions of severe anxiety or irritability
- Excessively demanding or dependent behavior
- Lack of response to outreach from staff

PHYSICAL INDICATORS

- Deterioration in physical appearance or personal hygiene
- Excessive fatigue, exhaustion; falling asleep in class repeatedly
- Visible changes in weight; statements about change in appetite or sleep
- Noticeable cuts, bruises or burns
- Frequent or chronic illness
- Disorganized speech, rapid or slurred speech, confusion
- Coming to class smelling of alcohol or other substances

SAFETY RISK INDICATORS (seek immediate consultation)

- Physical or verbal aggression that is directed at self, others, or property
- The student is unresponsive to the external environment
- The student is disconnected from reality
- The situation feels threatening or dangerous to you

OTHER FACTORS

- Concern about a student by their peers, roommates, or teaching assistant
- A hunch or gut-level reaction that something is wrong

Prevention

Crisis Information

To increase students' knowledge of and easy access to crisis lines, such as the **National Suicide Prevention Line (#988)** and **BucsPress2**, this information is or will be available in the following places:

- Listed on Student ID cards
- Listed on the ETSU homepage
- Located on the ETSU app

Faculty and staff may list crisis resources in their email signatures, as well as to include a mental health statement in their course syllabi. Examples are listed below:

Email Signature

*If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, please contact **ETSU Police** at **(423) 439-4480**, or **call 911**.*

*If you are experiencing a NON-life-threatening emotional crisis and wish to speak to a licensed counselor, you may choose to access **BUCSPress2**, our 24-hour mental health helpline by dialing **(423) 439-4841** and **pressing 2** when prompted.*

*For information about the ETSU Counseling Center, please visit our website:
<https://www.etsu.edu/students/counseling/>*

Syllabus Statement

ETSU Cares.

As a student, you may experience a range of personal issues that can create barriers to learning. The source of your difficulties may be directly related to your course work; if so, please speak with me. ETSU offers a variety of resources to support students in distress. We welcome and encourage students to contact the following resources for assistance and/or more information:

- *Counseling Center | <https://www.etsu.edu/students/counseling/> (423-439-3333)*
- *Dean of Students | <https://www.etsu.edu/students/dean-students/> (423-439-5377)*

If you are experiencing heightened feelings of hopelessness, thoughts of harm, or thoughts of suicide, crisis resources are also available by contacting:

- *BucsPress2 (24/7 mental health helpline) (423-439-4841, press 2)*
- *ETSU Police | <https://www.etsu.edu/dps/> (423-439-4480 OR Call 911)*
- *Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Call or Text 988*

Training

There are several trainings available to faculty, staff, and students who are interested in learning more about supporting individuals in distress.

- **Question. Persuade. Refer. (QPR)** | These trainings are for faculty and staff. Options available for in-person and Zoom. You can register for an upcoming training at: <https://www.etsu.edu/students/counseling/faculty.php>. If your department/unit is interested in requesting a group training, please contact Dr. Kevin Smith at smithkm18@etsu.edu.
- **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** | This training is open to faculty, staff, students, and to community members. Registration is required. There is a small fee for participation that may be waived in certain circumstances. This training is approximately 7 hours long. Contact darbyh@etsu.edu for more information.
- **Caring Crewmates Training** | This is an on-ground training designed to inform staff and students about how to help students locate and use resources. Contact deanofstudents@etsu.edu for more information .

The Dean of Students office additionally provides a brief presentation on campus resources and supporting students in distress.

Lethal Means Restriction

To reduce students' access to lethal means on campus, several initiatives have been introduced on campus.

- Signage with crisis resource information is installed in the parking garages
- Physical barriers are in place at the Brinkley Center Parking garage
- Prescription drop-off days are hosted each semester by the College of Pharmacy and at several locations in the city of Johnson City
- Free gun locks are available at the ETSU Police department

Student Wellness

Wellness and health promotion are suicide prevention. As such, all wellness initiatives on campus are considered suicide prevention measures.

Student Wellness is a unit under the Dean of Students office. Student Wellness oversees a committee that meets regularly to plan events, workshops, and other opportunities to promote wellness. Other areas are encouraged to let the Wellness committee know of events and other opportunities so that marketing and collaboration efforts can be maximized. Halie Darby is a contact for the SLE Wellness committee.

Intervention

BucsPress2

The University, through a partnership with Protocall Services, provides a 24/7 crisis phone line for ETSU students. Students are able to access this service by calling **(423) 439-4841** and **pressing 2** when prompted.

CARE Reports and CARE Team

Faculty, staff, students, and family members with concerns about a student are encouraged to file a CARE report online: <https://www.etsu.edu/students/dean-students/>. This information is reviewed by the Dean of Students office, who will then contact the student to offer additional support. CARE reports can be submitted anonymously; however, it is often helpful to have a contact on file in case additional information is needed.

The campus also has a CARE Team, comprised of staff members in Student Life and Enrollment units; key mental health providers across campus, and leaders in Public Safety and the Academic Provost's office. CARE Team meets on a biweekly basis to discuss students of concern and collaborate on a supportive plan of care.

Let's Talk

The ETSU Counseling Center offers drop-in consultations at various locations across campus. Students do not need to be a Counseling Center client to access this resource. No appointment necessary. No paperwork required. This is not an emergency resource. Current times and locations available here: <https://www.etsu.edu/students/counseling/services/letstalk.php>.

Campus Mental Health Support

ETSU Counseling Center | D.P. Culp Student Center, 3rd Floor
423-439-3333 | <https://www.etsu.edu/students/counseling/>

Behavioral Health and Wellness Clinic | Lucille Clement Hall
423-439-7777 | <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/psychology/bhwc/>

Community Counseling Clinic | 327 Warf Pickel Hall
423-439-7790 | <https://www.etsuhealth.org/services/counseling/>

University Health Center | 160 Roy S. Nicks Hall
423-439-4225 | <https://www.etsu.edu/nursing/universityhealth/>

Quillen College of Medicine (**Medical Students Only**)

<https://www.etsu.edu/com/studentsvcs/parc.php>

The medical school has a professional and academic resource center (PARC) that provides confidential counseling services to medical students, residents, and their families.

Gatton College of Pharmacy (**Pharmacy Students Only**) | VA Campus, Building 7, Room 212

423-439-6338 | Office Hours are Monday-Friday, 8:00 am-4:30 pm

The pharmacy school has professional counseling services available to students.

ETSU Athletics Behavioral Health (**ETSU Student Athletes Only**) | Mini Dome, Athletic Training Room
423-439-4044/423-439-4095 | https://etsubucs.com/sports/2023/7/24/_133347008694832474.aspx

Partners for Health (ETSU Employees)

855-HERE4TN (855-437-3486)

- Wellness Program: <https://www.tn.gov/partnersforhealth/other-benefits/wellness-program.html>
- Behavioral Health Benefits: <https://www.tn.gov/partnersforhealth/health-options/behavioral-health.html>

For medical emergencies on campus, please contact:

ETSU Police | 1043 Jack Vest Drive, Parking Garage, 2nd Floor
423-439-4480 or 911 from any campus phone | <https://www.etsu.edu/dps/>

Additional crisis resources can be found here:

<https://www.etsu.edu/students/dean-students/documents/crisis-mental-health-resources.pdf>.

Postvention

When tragedy occurs, it is incumbent upon the University to respond in a sensitive and caring manner, recognizing that individuals respond in different way to different circumstances that may surround a death. The death of a student affects the entire University community, as well as the family and friends of the deceased. These guidelines are designed to help faculty, professional staff, administrators and other University employees respond to the death of a student.

Internal communications and response

All student deaths will be responded to by the University in a consistent manner to the extent possible, regardless of the cause of death. The ETSU Remembers ceremony is held each year to publicly honor current students, faculty, and staff who have passed away in the preceding academic year. University responses typically involve the following steps.

- ETSU Police is often the first to be notified of a student death. They will contact the Dean of Students for further coordination.
- In situations involving risk to other members of the campus community, an ETSU Alert will be issued by ETSU Police/ Emergency Management to provide necessary safety information.
- The Dean of Students, the Director of the Counseling Center, and a representative from ETSU Police will contact the next of kin if the death occurred on campus. The Dean of Students will coordinate with the family of the deceased regarding travel, accommodations, retrieving the students' belongings, and making arrangements with local authorities.
- The Dean of Students will contact students' faculty members to share relevant information and resources.
- The Dean of Students will work with the Dean of Student Engagement to determine whether the student was affiliated with any on-campus organizations and will contact organization leaders as indicated.
- If the student is military-affiliated, Military and Veterans Services will be contacted by the Dean of Students.
- Any requests for comment by local media will be coordinated through University Marketing and Communications.
- The office coordinator for Student Life and Enrollment will send out a death notification to campus units/departments responsible for management of student accounts.

Mental Health-Critical Incident Response Team (MH-CIRT)

The Mental Health-Critical Incident Response Team will meet as needed to coordinate mental health resources for students during large scale events or events that have significant impact on campus. The Dean of Students provides oversight of the team, with the Counseling Center Director acting as the assistant coordinator. Core members of MH-CIRT additionally consist of leadership from the following: Public Safety, campus Mental Health providers, campus ministers, and, as appropriate, leaders in Student Life, Administration, and Emergency Management.

Mental Health Support

Individuals who were close to the deceased are encouraged to reach out to a mental health provider for support. Group support is available; however, this should be scheduled outside of regular events (e.g., organization meetings, classes) and should be voluntary/optional for those affected. If the individual seeking services is an ETSU, the Counseling Center is available to assist. ETSU employees should contact mental health providers through the University's EAP.

ETSU Remembers and other options for memorialization

Each year, ETSU hosts a special ceremony called ETSU Remembers to honor those in the University community who have passed away in the previous year. Family members of those being honored will be invited to this ceremony as well.

More information can be found at: <https://www.etsu.edu/students/remembers.php>

- Plant a flower or tree in memory of your loved one
- Hold a day of community service or create a school-based community service program in honor of the deceased
- Put together a team to participate in an awareness or fundraising event sponsored by one of the national mental health or suicide prevention organizations
- Sponsor a mental health awareness day
- Volunteer at a community crisis hotline
- Raise funds to help the family defray their funeral expenses

Suggestions for Survivors

- Know you may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings but that all your feelings are normal. Each day may be different and so might your moods.
- Remember to take one moment or one day at a time.
- Don't try to get through this time alone. Connect with others. Seek professional or peer support as needed.
- Give yourself time to heal. It may not be a linear or simple process. Expect setbacks and waves of grief.
- Try to put off major decisions.
- Be patient with yourself and others who may not understand.
- Call on your personal faith to help you through.
- Maintaining routine is key. Try to stick with your normal routine as much as possible.

Coping Strategies

- Identify and express your emotions.
- Use simple relaxation and distraction skills, such as taking three deep, slow breaths or closing your eyes and counting to 10.
- Engage in favorite activities or hobbies, such as music, talking with a friend, reading, or going to a movie
- Exercise
- Think about how you have coped with difficulties in the past and attempt those now
- Write a list of people you can turn to for support
- Write a list of things you are looking forward to
- Focus on personal goals

Suggestions for Faculty

Normalcy and routine help provide a sense of security, but remember, learning will be compromised. Consider the following when you encounter students who may be impacted by a loss. Please also refer to the **Faculty and Staff Guide for Supporting Students in Distress** (located on the Dean of Students webpage) to learn more about mental health concerns and how they may show up in the classroom.

- Allow for grief, but don't assume it.
- Recommend counseling to students who are struggling.
- Extend an assignment deadline or provide make-up work, if appropriate.
- Facilitate a leave of absence or medical withdrawal if that becomes necessary.
- Consult with appropriate offices on campus.
- Know your limits and take care of yourself.

Procedures for Student Info and Accounts

Financial Aid

A tuition refund would be processed to the student's account. Financial Aid would cancel any pending disbursements to the student. Any award items that have already been paid and posted to the student's account, including the tuition refund, will remain. Financial Aid will not charge loan monies or scholarship monies back to a student's account. Financial Aid debt incurred by the student may be eligible for discharge.

ETSU Financial Aid | 423-439-4300

Federal Direct Student Loan customer service line | 1-800-557-7391

Perkins Loan customer service line | 1-888-549-3274

Admissions/ Registrar

The student's account will be marked inactive. The student's transcript may be requested from the Office of the Registrar. A death certificate is required.

ETSU Office of Admissions | 423-439-4213

ETSU Office of the Registrar | 423-439-4230

Housing

Housing and Residence Life will cancel any contract on file for the student and process any applicable refund. Housing staff will assist the family with a plan to pick up belongings.

ETSU Housing and Residence Life | 423-439-4446

Post Office

Any mail is held for next of kin. After one week, credit card statements, bank statements, and any bills may be marked RTS (return to sender). An identified family member can request a FORWARD for that mail but that needs to be done in person at the Post Office.

ETSU Post Office | 423-439-4232

Academics

Professors will be notified by the Dean of Students office. Grades for the term will not post.

Dean of Students | 423-439-5377

Accounts / Email

Student's Goldlink course account will be disabled. Student's email account will be disabled.

ETSU Information Technology Services | 423-439-6809

Supplementary Resources

Campus Crisis Response Protocols

Faculty and Staff Guide for Supporting Students in Distress
(located at www.etsu.edu/students/dean-students)