



STUDENT SUICIDE PREVENTION PROTOCOL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY IMPLEMENT A STUDENT SUICIDE PREVENTION PROTOCOL?

In the case of *Nguyen vs. MIT*, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court determined that colleges and universities have a "special relationship" with their students, including an affirmative duty to take "reasonable measures" to prevent a student's suicide, "where a university has actual knowledge of a student's suicide attempt that occurred while enrolled at the university or recently before matriculation, or of a student's stated plans or intentions to commit suicide."

The Massachusetts Community College General Counsel's Office developed the student suicide prevention protocol to ensure that all Massachusetts community colleges are taking the necessary steps to help prevent student suicide.

According to many suicide prevention organizations, suicide is preventable. In a July 2018 communication titled "Suicide Prevention," the National Association of Behavioral Intervention Teams highlighted the growing number of suicides across the nation. From veterans to college students, suicide rates have increased significantly over the past 20 years. Yet, many suicide prevention organizations agree that suicide is preventable. For more information on student suicide prevention, please visit the following organizations:

- [Active Minds](#)
- [Jed Foundation](#)
- [Jordan Porco Foundation](#)
- [safeTALK](#)
- [ASIST](#)
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline at [1.800.273.TALK \(1.800.273.8255\)](tel:1800273TALK)

WHAT IS MY ROLE AS A FACULTY OR STAFF MEMBER WITH RESPECT TO THE STUDENT SUICIDE PREVENTION PROTOCOL, AND HOW CAN I HELP A STUDENT?

Know your HCC resources

- Campus Police: In an emergency immediately contact campus police at Ext. 2211 from an on-campus phone or [413.552.2211](tel:413.552.2211) or 911 from any other phone.
- WellConnect Student Assistance Program: 24/7 confidential counseling support at [866.640.4777](tel:866.640.4777); three free in-person counseling visits with one of over 300 area providers.
- Behavioral Intervention Team: Faculty and staff who are concerned about an individual's behavior should contact the BIT, which was created to assess the behavior of individuals of concern and make appropriate referrals prior to these behaviors rising to a threat level. The team is chaired by Dean of Students Harmony Cross, [413.552.2786](tel:413.552.2786) or hcross@hcc.edu.

If you know and are comfortable talking with the student:

- Ask! It is okay to ask someone if they are having suicidal thoughts or feelings.
- Take the conversation seriously.
- Listen intently and respond empathetically.

According to the Student Suicide Prevention Protocol, you must act if you become aware of the following:

- An active suicide attempt (on or off campus): Immediately contact campus police at Ext. 2211 from an on-campus phone or [413.552.2211](tel:413.552.2211) or 911 from any other phone. Then contact the Harmony Cross, dean of students immediately at [413.552.2786](tel:413.552.2786). If the dean of students is not available, contact the designee, Renee Tastad, interim vice president of Student Affairs at [413.552.2296](tel:413.552.2296).
- Previous suicide attempt: Contact Harmony Cross, dean of students, at [413.552.2786](tel:413.552.2786) or hcross@hcc.edu. If the dean of students is not available, contact Renee Tastad, interim VP of Student Affairs at [413.552.2296](tel:413.552.2296) or rtastad@hcc.edu.
- Stated plans or intentions to commit suicide: Immediately contact campus police at Ext. 2211 from an on-campus phone or [413.552.2211](tel:413.552.2211) or 911 from any

other phone. Then contact Harmony Cross, dean of students immediately at [413.552.2786](tel:413.552.2786). If the dean of students is not available, contact the designee Renee Tastad, interim vice president of Student Affairs, at [413.552.2296](tel:413.552.2296).

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I FOLLOW THE PROTOCOL?

In an emergency, campus police will begin the student suicide prevention protocol by contacting the student's emergency contact, performing a wellness check, and/or engaging other emergency protocols to ensure the safety of the student. Before returning to their studies, the student may be required to provide documentation from a health professional that they are ready to return.

In a non-emergency, the dean of students and the BIT team will discuss reaching out to the student to assure the student has a support network. Campus police or the dean of students may do a wellness check and/or contact the student's emergency contact.

WILL THERE BE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES I CAN ATTEND?

The following gatekeeper training will be provided throughout the year. Dates/times will be published soon.

QPR Gatekeeping/MA DPH Training for Suicide Prevention

QPR is an acronym for "Question. Persuade. Refer." As a gatekeeper, you will learn how to recognize signs of suicide, know how to offer hope, and know how to get help and save a life. This approach to suicide prevention relies on applying network theory, i.e., the person most likely to prevent a person from taking one's own life is someone the person already knows. Learn how to recognize and respond to suicide warning signs. "Ask the question, save a life."

USA Suicide Statistics, 2017 (via [QPR Institute](#))

- 47,000 deaths annually are attributed to suicide. It is a leading cause of death.
- 1 suicide occurs every 11 minutes or 129 suicides every day
- 6,252 young people (age 15-24) die by suicide each year at a rate of one suicide every two hours.

- Estimates of attempted suicide: 25 attempts for each documented death.
Note: 47,000 suicides translated into 1,200,000 attempts annually.

ARE ALL 15 MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY COLLEGES REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT THE PROTOCOL?

Yes. The protocol is required system-wide.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION TEAM?

Please visit the [Behavioral Intervention Team](#) page for more information.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROTOCOL?

For questions about the suicide prevention protocol, contact Harmony Cross, dean of students, at [413.552.2786](tel:413.552.2786) or hcross@hcc.edu.