



cura personalis

Responding To Mental Health Emergencies A Guide for Faculty

This brochure is meant to assist faculty when they observe that a student may need assistance with a mental or emotional crisis.

Specific emergency procedures can be found on the back cover.



FORDHAM UNIVERSITY
THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



A Jesuit University should distinguish itself by offering a human, social, spiritual, and moral formation, and for pastoral attention to its students and to the different groups of people who work in it or are related to it.

—34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus

About this brochure

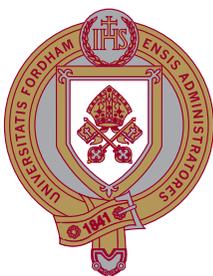
This brochure has been jointly developed for faculty by the Division of Student Affairs and the Student Life Committee of the Faculty Senate.

In recent years, universities have faced legal action in the face of student suicides. However, according to Fordham University's Office of Legal Counsel:

"It is both morally sound and legally prudent for faculty who recognize a student is in emotional distress to offer the student some form of assistance that relates to their authority as educators concerned about their students' physical and emotional well being. Accordingly, faculty, even those with specialized training in relevant fields, should make prompt referrals to the dean of students if they suspect a student is in emotional distress or threatening harm to him/herself or others."

This guide also provides some basic information on symptoms and risk factors for suicide. Please note:

This guide is intended to be used to review risk factors for suicide, how to approach students in crisis as well as the resources that are available on campus. A guide can only identify a limited number of important items. Please use the procedure on the back of this brochure for assistance in all emergencies. In non-emergencies, contact the dean of students or Counseling Center. At Fordham, help is just a phone call away 24 hours every day. Also, please visit the Counseling Center webpage at www.fordham.edu/counseling where you will find free and anonymous screenings for depression, anxiety, alcohol use, eating disorders, as well as other resources.



How to help a student (in a non-emergency situation)

See the procedure on the back cover for emergencies. In non-emergencies, use the information on this page.

- Express your concern to the student citing the risk factors you have observed.
- Ask about suicidal thoughts directly and use the word suicide. This does not increase the risk of a suicide occurring. In fact, students are often relieved to have someone to talk to.
- If the student has a few of the risk factors, but denies being suicidal, it makes sense for him or her to touch base with a counselor. A student can call the Counseling Center to set up an appointment at a convenient time. You are encouraged nonetheless to contact help using the procedure in this brochure.
- NEVER agree to keep serious suicidal thoughts in confidence. It is important that a student with these thoughts meet with a counseling professional to receive the support he or she needs.
- Be supportive and follow-up with the student while getting professional assistance.
- Don't try to fly solo.

Just a phone call away

In a non-emergency, please call or walk students to the office below.

Counseling Center

Rose Hill

Monday - Thursday: 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Friday: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Phone: (718) 817-3725

Location: O'Hare Hall Basement
(facing parking structure)

Lincoln Center

Monday - Thursday: 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Friday: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Phone: (212) 636-6225

Location: 211 McMahon Hall
(enter from the Plaza)

Dean of Students

Rose Hill

Hours: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Phone: (718) 817-4755

Location: Keating Hall 100

Lincoln Center

Hours: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Phone: (212) 636-6250

Location: 408 LL

What To Do in an EMERGENCY

How to proceed if a student has communicated to you that he or she is in a crisis state emotionally and/or thinking of doing harm to him/herself or to another person:

Contact the dean of students (during business hours) **or the security supervisor** (after hours or over weekends) and clearly state that you need to report a MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY. The dean of students or a member of the staff will respond directly to you. You may also walk the student to the offices below. Staff in these offices are trained to find a professional who will assist immediately. Faculty members should follow these procedures even if the student's behaviors are ambiguous.

How to Contact Us

During business hours:

Call the Office of the Dean of Students/Student Affairs

Rose Hill

Hours: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Phone: (718) 817-4755

Location: Keating Hall 100

Lincoln Center

Hours: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Phone: (212) 636-6250

Location: 408 LL

After hours and on weekends:

Call University Security

(If forwarded to front desk, ask to speak to the security supervisor)

Rose Hill

Hours: 5 p.m. – 9 a.m.

Phone: (718) 817-4078

Lincoln Center

Hours: 6 p.m. – 10 a.m.

Phone: (212) 636-6076

If you are with the student, DO NOT leave the student alone or let him or her leave. Contact us immediately.

For non-emergency situations regarding a student's mental or emotional state, please contact the dean of students at your campus for guidance. In non-emergency situations, you may also contact Counseling and Psychological Services. Contact information can be found on the How to Help a Student page of this brochure.

In all cases, the dean of students or staff members share information with the appropriate school, class dean or college.

For more information, visit: www.fordham.edu/mentalhealthemergency

What you need to know

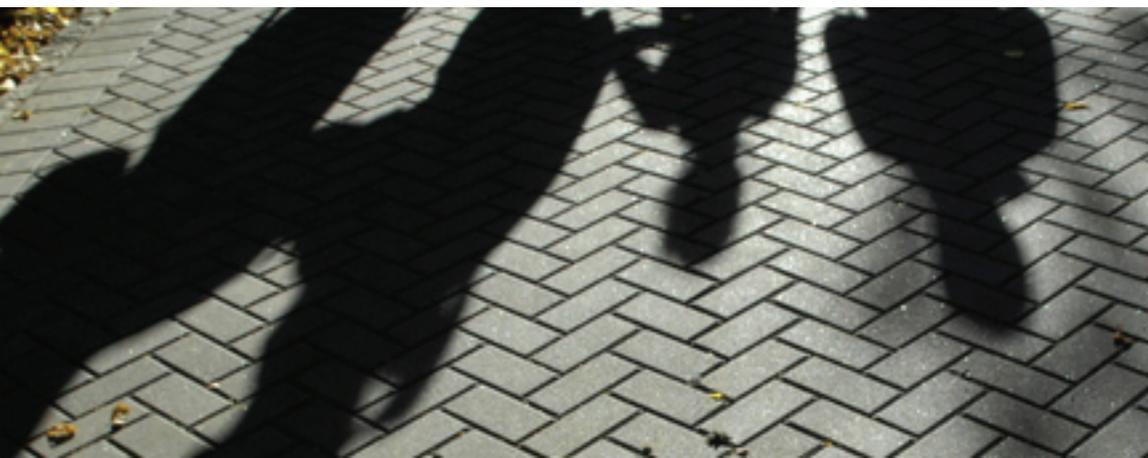
Sadly, suicide is the second leading cause of death, after accidents, among college students. We are fortunate here at Fordham to have a student body, staff, faculty and administrators who are aware of students who are struggling emotionally and highly effective at getting students the help they need.

Risk Factors

Characteristics found to be associated with risk for suicide:

- Prior suicide attempt(s)—the strongest predictor of suicide
- Older students—students aged 25 and older are more likely to commit suicide than younger students
- Female graduate students—recent data suggest that women in graduate school are at greatest risk
- Family history of suicide (especially a parent)
- Depression or other mood disorder
- Social isolation
- Alcohol and/or other drug use
- Poor impulse control
- History of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse
- Unrealistic parental expectations
- Confusion/conflict about sexuality—GLBT students appear to be at higher risk for suicide

Request to report a concern without a student learning your identity at any time—the important thing is to share any concerns you may have.





Precipitating Factors

- Stressful events, situations or conditions may increase one's likelihood of attempting suicide
- Hopelessness due to untreated depression—belief that things can't change or get better
- Being fired or expelled from school
- Recent unwanted move (e.g. moving to a new school or dorm room)
- Loss of any major relationship (e.g. boyfriend, best friend, etc.)
- Death of parent, spouse, child or best friend, especially if by suicide
- Diagnosis of a serious or terminal illness
- Sudden unexpected loss of freedom or fear of punishment (e.g. jail time or sanction from school)
- Anticipated loss of financial security

Warning Signs

Changes in a person's behaviors may indicate risk for suicide:

Direct Verbal Warning Signs

- "I've decided to kill myself."
- "I wish I were dead."
- "I'm going to end it all."
- "If _____, I'll kill myself." (e.g. I fail this course, she leaves me, etc.)

Less Direct Verbal Warning Signs

- "I'm tired of life, I just can't go on."
- "My family would be better off without me."
- "Who cares if I'm dead anyway?"