A Multi-Campus Approach to Suicide Prevention Protocols

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University of California System

UC Berkeley
UC Davis
UC Irvine
UCLA
UC Merced
UCSF
UC Santa Barbara
UC San Diego
UC Santa Cruz
UC Riverside
Goal of UC Effort:

Develop UC System-wide policies and guidelines for addressing students at risk for suicide.

Specifically Two Steps…

1. To Create Baseline Guidelines for Each Campus.

2. To Tailor Guidelines to Culture of Each Campus.
Why?

• Lack of consistency and coordination across disciplines and campus units when communicating about students at risk.

• No existing policies that guide campus administrators, faculty or staff in how to handle students at risk for self harm.

History Prompting Effort

• Work from the JED Foundation
• Work from the Air Force Suicide Prevention Model
• Work from UC Mental Health Task Force
• Liability Worries, post-Shin and other cases.
Lessons from the Jed Foundation Framework

A Strong recommendation to develop campus safety protocols to address range of needs for students who are acutely distressed and suicidal.

Jed Foundation Framework Specifically Recommends…

• Allocating **sufficient resources and funds** to allow for the development of protocols.

• Protocol development should “involve broad-based **participation of key campus constituencies**.”
Air Force Model Stresses …

Recognition that suicide is a military **community problem**, not a medical problem.

Implications for UC Protocol Development Priorities…

1. Need to focus on funding work in this area.
2. Need to obtain buy-in of higher administration.
3. Need to place responsibility on University administration, not Counseling Center, to address this community-wide problem.
Steps of UC’s Approach

- **Step 1**: Get UC administrators invested.
- **Step 2**: Collaborate with University General Counsel’s Office (e.g. good risk management).
- **Step 3**: Organize Counseling Center Directors system-wide to promote a unified effort.
- **Step 4**: Advocate for a UC System-wide committee to assess student mental health needs/gaps and to recommend funding campus community solutions.
- **Step 5**: Create a System-wide conference to educate key campus members, clarify roles, and develop baseline protocols for communicating across campus to help students at risk.

Agenda for System-wide Conference

1. **Provide Legal Overview**: (HIPAA, FERPA, ADA, Health Care Laws)
2. **Various Campus Unit Perspectives**: Discussion of Protocol needs/challenges (Housing, Police, Judicial Affairs, Counseling Center, Deans…)
3. **Clinical Protocols** for Managing Suicidal Students (best practices and models, e.g. Illinois model)
4. **Case Studies** to Practice Protocol Options
5. **Post-Conference** Follow-up Plans
Barriers/Challenges to a System-wide Approach

• Need to Balance Unique Campus Cultures with System-wide Guidelines/Protocols

• Need to Manage Multiple Layers of Bureaucracy
  – Office of President
  – University Legal Counsel
  – Campus Vice-Chancellors for Student Affairs
  – Directors of Campus Counseling Centers
  – Directors of Campus Student Service Units

Some Challenges to Consider..

• Conference Costs, who covers this?
• Conference Planning Tasks, who takes on what?
• Decision Making Process, which decisions get made where?
• Which individual (s) or group is responsible for keeping this agenda moving?
Some Advantages of a System-wide Approach

• Financial and Legal resources and support from system-wide administration
• Stronger collegial relationships across campuses and with administration at Office of President
• Development of a defensible standard of practice for managing high risk students.