

Strategic Planning Video Notes

The following sections will help you walk through the next phase in planning by creating goals and strategies. Keep in mind, the goals are the “what” of the prevention plan while the strategies are the “how”.

Gathering Information

There are many ways to gather information on college campuses. The video discussed several ways but you may decide you already have enough information to move forward or you may have an alternative plan. If you are still exploring options we recommend one of the following:

Self-assessment surveys

Typically, a small team collects responses from relevant offices across campus, as well as from off-campus organizations that have contact with students. For example, counseling centers may provide information such as the number of students seen in the center as well as the number of students transferred to the hospital. The local hospital may be able to provide information on the number of students seen for suicide ideation, attempts, and substance use concerns. This may require an MOU.

You may access our self-assessment tool from our website by clicking here. (INSERT LINK TO TOOL)

Policy and protocol reviews

It is essential to review existing policies and protocols in order to create a campus-wide coordinated response to student crisis. Do not be surprised if you find offices with outdated policies or even policies that contradict one another. This is simply more justification for the need for a unified, team approach.

Formal surveys

It is likely that your campus participates in at least one formal survey that gathers data on student well-being. Some of the more common surveys are:

- American College Health Association’s National College Health Assessment (NCHA)
- Association for University and College Counseling Center Director’s Survey
- Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH) survey
- Healthy Minds Study

If your campus does not participate in a formal survey perhaps it collects data on student well-being through an office on campus.

Conversations with key stakeholders

Simply talking with and documenting conversations with key stakeholders such as counselors, residence life staff, campus security, and student conduct can provide information on what is already happening as well as areas where collaborations could be helpful.

Focus groups

If you have gathered some information but would like to know some more details, a focus group may be helpful.

Using data can help ensure your work is efficient and effective. Additionally, it is important to make sure your assumed needs match up with the actual needs of the campus community.

Putting the Essentials in Place

While all nine areas are important for a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention and campus well-being, some strategies are not only essential but are also considered best practice for all campuses to have in place. If you imagine a pyramid, most of our students fall in the bottom layer. They need very little additional resources other than an environment and education that promotes positive well-being. A subset of our students fall in the middle. These students may have a number of distressing life circumstances or psychological challenges and are at risk for thoughts of suicide. They need interventions to help move them down to the bottom layer of students with good mental health. The final group, at the top of the pyramid, requires more intensive intervention to help them keep safe, recover, and move down the pyramid towards good mental health. This group can utilize all of our time and resources leaving nothing for the bottom two groups. Likewise, many of the students in the bottom two groups will move up if they are not provided with the necessary education, resources, and programs to support their well-being. (INSERT VISUAL OF PYRAMID WITH LABELED PARTS HERE)

Having said that, the essentials will focus on working with students in that top level in an efficient and effective manner in order to free up time and resources to focus on the strategies necessary to support the bottom two layers. As a review, here are the areas we feel should be given priority:

- **Training for clinicians:** Specifically in the areas of how to care for people who are having thoughts of suicide or experiencing a suicidal crisis. See the video (INSERT LINK HERE) on Effective Care and Treatment for more information on standards of care for working with suicidal clients and what training options are available to you.
- **Training for key gatekeepers or natural helpers:** Ideally, everyone on campus would know something about how to help a person in distress and be familiar with campus support services. However, training is necessary for anyone likely to encounter people who are distressed. This group could include residence life staff, campus security, medical staff, campus ministers, student conduct office staff, financial aid officers, student leaders, peer support providers, and even professors and academic advisors. These helpers need to know how to talk to those in distress and, when necessary, ask directly about thoughts of suicide. See the video on “Improving Identification” (INSERT LINK HERE) for more information on training opportunities.
- **Having an option for walk-in or triage appointments:** Training natural helpers on assisting students in seeking services will not work if those services are full or have long wait times. It is important to develop a system that allows crisis walk-ins. Before you decide to start working on this task, please watch “Managing Expectations for Services” (INSERT LINK)
- **Developing protocols for responding to students in crisis:** It is essential to know protocols for responding to a crisis well before any crisis occurs. Campuses should have protocols in place that address the who, what, when, and how of each layers of crisis response. These protocols should be clearly outlined and easily accessible. See “Developing Crisis Management Protocols” (INSERT LINK) for more information on this area.
- **Setting up agreements with community care providers:** It is important to include written agreements or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with local emergency service providers when developing crisis management plans. Having these agreements in place before a crisis makes managing the situation easier, safer, and more effective. More on this can be found in our video on “Supporting Care Transitions” (INSERT LINK)
- **Educating students and families about limits of confidentiality:** Many schools begin educating students and families about limits of information sharing during orientation. No matter when your campus chooses to share this information, it is important to notify families and students on the limits

of confidentiality. More on this can be found by watching the video on “Managing Expectations for Services” (INSERT LINK)

- **Having a postvention plan:** Postvention is the work we do following a suicide related crisis that affects multiple students at the same time, whether that is a death by suicide or a high profile attempt. This planning helps the campus respond quickly to those most affected and acknowledge the loss while reducing risk for suicide contagion. While no one wants to have to use a postvention plan, having a plan in place can greatly impact your ability to manage the crisis. For more information on creating a postvention plan see our video on “Postvention Procedures.”

If all of these areas are covered already at your institution, great! Simply discuss the previous video to determine what your next goal should be!

Choosing a Goal

After reviewing the information gathered, it is time to select ONE specific need you, as a team, feel you can reasonably address in a specified amount of time. Comprehensive suicide prevention is best done incrementally, one step at a time.

This section is simply designed to focus on WHAT you want to accomplish. There will be time later to discuss strategies to address the HOW you are going to accomplish your goal. Don't forget, goals are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-limited

So, in the space below, take some time to brainstorm goals and then select which goal will be your first focus.

GOAL IDEAS:

FIRST GOAL:

Selecting Strategies

Now that you have selected WHAT goal you want to work on, it is time to select strategies you will use to make that goal happen. There are a number of considerations to keep in mind as you choose your strategies:

- **Best practices:** Whenever possible follow evidence based strategies to ensure you are operating under best practice.
- Make the strategy **appropriate:** It makes no sense to use a strategy that would ultimately not lead to the desired outcome.
- Make sure the strategies are **feasible.**
- Is your strategy **acceptable** to the target audience? A great way to ensure this is to include members of your target audience in the planning and evaluation stages.
- Determine which strategies will **reach** the largest number of people.
- Ensure your **resources** are adequate to implement your strategy.
- Have a **sustainability** plan to ensure new staff and students are made aware and trained.

You may refer to the “Selecting Strategies” handout for examples of possible strategies. However, do not limit yourself to this list. You should choose strategies that are unique to the needs of your campus community. In the space below, begin to brainstorm potential strategies for the goal you selected above.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES: