

Alvernia University

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan & Resources

Alvernia University and Penn Medicine created this resource guide for suicide prevention and mental health resources for anyone struggling with their mental health or having thoughts of suicide. Alvernia University believes it is essential for staff, faculty, students, and the community to be educated on warning signs, risk factors, and ways to respond related to suicidal ideation and people struggling with their mental health.

Signs

Risk Factors	Signs	Increase Protective Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Previous suicide attempt• Family history of suicide• Access to lethal means• History of mental health diagnosis• Recent discharge from inpatient hospitalization• Alcohol or substance use disorders• Trauma/abuse history• Self-injurious behaviors• Chronic Illness• Recent breakup• Recent job loss or financial strain• Limited natural support	<p>Academic Signs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decline in quality/quantity of work.• Negative change in classroom performance. Missed assignments or exams.• Chronic absences or tardiness.• Disorganized or inconsistent performance. Change in class participation or level of engagement.• Students may send long or aggressive emails. <p>Physical Signs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Falling asleep in class.• Noticeable change in energy level (either direction, high or low energy).• Noticeable change in hygiene or appearance.• Noticeable change in weight gain or loss.• Possible alcohol intoxication or substance use.• Noticeable marks (cuts, bruises or burns).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to licensed counselors for mental health and substance use disorders• Access to a medical physician• Restrict access to lethal means of suicide or self-harm• Increase connections between family, friends and community support• Conflict-resolution techniques

	<p>Emotional Signs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unseemly emotional (unexpected anger, sobbing). • Student is withdrawn, isolated or more energy than usual. • Expression of hopelessness, death, fear or worthlessness. • Thoughts of suicide. • Indicating distress, family issues or other stressors. • Peer concern about a student. <p>Individual Circumstance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing insecurities (unstable, inadequate, unsafe housing, staying with friends, living in a car). • Food insecurities (limited access to food, skipping meals). • Financial stress • Transportation barriers 	
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How to show support to someone at-risk:

If you notice any of the following signs with the person of concern, below are the steps you can take:

Signs:

- Changes in mood
- Withdrawn/isolated
- Thoughts of hopelessness
- Increased alcohol/substance use

Steps you can take:

- Let the person know it is OK not to know fully what is wrong and it is OK to ask for help.
- Schedule a time to talk in private and share concerns

- Do not judge but offer support and empathy
- Provide resources and avoid giving advice
- Ask directly about suicide. This does not increase risk. This may allow them to feel relieved and seek help.
- Assure them that the problem is not unusual.
- Show how they can seek assistance via Penn Medicine
- Penn Medicine has an emergency on-call line, 610-568-1467.
- Use [Alvernia University | Reporting "Report It"](#) to share your concerns and request additional support for a student.
- Call Public Safety at 610-796-8350 or call 911 if you feel someone is at imminent risk

Crisis Information

Definition of a mental health crisis:

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), a mental health crisis is “any situation in which a person’s behavior puts them at risk of hurting themselves or others and/or prevents them from being able to care for themselves or function effectively in the community”. [Navigating a Mental Health Crisis | National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)

Examples of a mental health crisis include:

- Suicidal Ideation or suicide intent and may have a plan
- Panic Attacks
- Self-harm
- Psychosis – experiencing delusions or hallucinations

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis, help is available. Please contact Penn Medicine at 610-568-1467 (listen for ‘urgent mental health concern’ option), Public Safety at 610-796-8350, or 911 for immediate support.

Below is information concerning mental health crises

[Get Suicide or Mental Health Crisis Help \(988\) | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)

[Suicide Prevention Resources | Suicide Prevention | CDC](#)

[Topics and Terms – Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)

[Suicide Prevention - National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)

[Helping Your Loved One Who is Suicidal: A Guide for Family and Friends | SAMHSA Library](#)

[Suicidal Behavior Resources | SAMHSA](#)

[PA Care Partnership | PA Care Partnership](#)

Access Help

On-Campus Resources

- **Penn Medicine Medical and Counseling Center**
Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday – 7:30am-4:30p;
Tuesday – 9:00am-6:00pm and Friday 7:30am-2:00pm
If a student is experiencing a mental health crisis, please call Penn Medicine at 610-568-1467. All students (undergraduate, graduate, and adult) are eligible for services provided at the Medical and Counseling Center.
- **After hours** - If a student is experiencing a health crisis, call 911 and then alert Public Safety (610-796-8350). Contact Penn Medicine Medical and Counseling Center at 610-568-1467 and select option for urgent mental health concern to be transferred to a live mental health clinician for assessment and direction regarding next steps.

Additional Crisis Resources

Local Crisis Lines

- Berks County Crisis Line (Holcomb): 610-379-2007
- Schuylkill County Crisis Line: 877-993-4357 or text 63288
- Philadelphia Crisis: 215-685-6440

State

- PA Suicide Prevention: 855-284-2494, [mentalhealthline.org](https://www.mentalhealthline.org)

National

- [**988 Lifeline - If you need emotional support, reach out to the national mental health hotline: 988. Dial 988 24/7**](#)
- [**Crisis Text Line | Text HOME to 741741 Free, 24/7 Mental Health Support Text Connect to 741741**](#)

- [The Trevor Project - Suicide Prevention for LGBTQ+ Young People](#)
Support for LGBTQ+ 24/7 lifeline dial 1-866-488-7386 or text 678-678
- [The Steve Fund](#) Text Steve to 741741 for a culturally trained counselor
- Vet2Vet Veteran's Crisis Hotline, 1-877-838-2838 (1-877-VET-2-VET)
- Veteran's Crisis Line, 1-800-273-8255 press 1

Mental Health Resources

As part of the Penn Medicine - Alvernia Medical and Counseling Center, we offer counseling support. Many individuals find that talking to an unbiased third party can help gain perspective on a current emotional problem. Students often discover that the counseling process helps build confidence in dealing with the daily struggles associated with college life. We often see students reach out to Counseling Services for reasons such as:

- Anger management
- Self-esteem issues
- Relationship/family issues
- Adjusting to college life
- Loneliness, loss, or depression
- Stress and anxiety
- Substance use/abuse
- Eating disorders

Screenings

If you or someone you know is struggling emotionally, please contact Penn Medicine for an appointment. If you are not sure if you want/need to schedule with one of our counselors, please take a [confidential online screening](#). This screening will take only a few minutes to complete and will determine whether an appointment should be scheduled. These screenings are free for Alvernia University students. ****Important note: Results are not forwarded to Penn Medicine Medical and Counseling Center staff. ****

Local Mental Health providers

Penn Medicine and the social worker at Alvernia University can refer students to local counseling centers when needed or requested. To find local providers in your area, please refer to the back of your insurance card to find the website for a provider list, OR refer to [Find a Therapist, Psychologist, Counselor - Psychology Today](#).

Alvernia University Outreach Plans

Alvernia University and Penn Medicine proactively engage in professional development, outreach, and mental health awareness and suicide prevention initiatives during the year, including

- **Programming for mental health/suicide awareness on campus**
- **Mental Health training for staff, faculty, and students**
- **Thoughtful Assessment Group – to provide support/resources to students in need**
- **QPR trainings for staff of the Office of Residence Life**

Penn Medicine routinely provides QPR training to students, staff, and faculty when requested. If you would like more information on QPR training, please reach out to Penn Medicine at 610-568-1467.

Penn Medicine is a part of the Thoughtful Assessment Group and provides consultation. In addition, Penn Medicine can provide crisis support and 24/7 crisis support that follows protocol.

Post Intervention Plan

Alvernia University's Office of Provost maintains the protocol for emergencies that detail the steps needed for staff to take during a campus emergency, such as a suicide attempt or threat. There is a communication plan for students, staff, faculty, and caregivers in an emergency. Penn Medicine offers needed counseling sessions during these times to all students, staff, and faculty affected by such an event. To find more information, please reach out to Mary-Ellen Wells, Associate Provost, Office of the Provost at maryellen.wells@alvernia.edu OR [484-254-2106](tel:484-254-2106).