

# A Multi-Campus Approach to Suicide Prevention Protocols

Jeffrey P. Prince, Ph.D.  
University of California, Berkeley

## 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.