

## Formalize Unwritten Protocols

Written protocols help to ensure that a campus responds to a crisis in an organized, timely, and compassionate way. When protocols aren't formally documented, this can create confusion and uncertainty among staff, faculty, and students, making a crisis situation worse.

So be sure to put crisis protocols in writing as soon as possible, especially before the person (or persons) who know the protocols leave your institution. Here's how to get started:

**Find out if unwritten protocols exist** – Ask different departments if they have any unwritten procedures for responding to students in distress or students who have attempted suicide.

**Identify people familiar with unwritten crisis protocols** – Contact the staff most knowledgeable about or who use specific processes and procedures for students in crisis.

**Put the protocols in writing** – Be prepared to meet with these key people to write down their procedures and processes.

*Here are some helpful questions to ask staff about unwritten protocols.*

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
<b>Warning Signs</b>	
<i>What are the warning signs for suicide that staff, faculty, or resident assistants (RAs) should look for?</i>	
<b>Responding to a crisis</b>	
<i>How should staff, faculty, or RAs respond to a distressed or suicidal person?</i>	
<i>What actions should staff, faculty, or RAs take if a student is at serious risk?</i>	
<i>What actions should staff, faculty, or RAs take if a student has attempted suicide and needs immediate medical attention?</i>	
<b>Emergency Contacts</b>	
<i>Who should be contacted if a staff or faculty member or an RA is worried about a student?</i>	
<i>When should the student's emergency contact be notified?</i>	
<b>Making referrals</b>	
<i>How do staff, faculty, or RAs refer a student at risk to the counseling center or other mental health services?</i>	