

DISCLOSURE OF SUICIDAL INTENT/THINKING

Fairview Baptist Church

The purpose of this document is to help the pastors, ministry residents and additional church staff take appropriate steps when suicidal intent and/or thoughts have been disclosed to them.

POLICY

All counseling pastors, ministry residents, and additional church staff will take threats of suicide seriously by offering compassion and exercising appropriate response. If suicidal ideation (thinking), threat(s) or attempt(s) are communicated, follow the outlined procedures below.

PROCEDURES

If an individual directly discloses to a pastor, ministry resident, or additional church staff member OR a pastor, ministry resident, or additional church staff member learns that a person has suicidal thoughts/intentions, a desire to die, or exhibits self-harming behavior, contact Amber Henderson immediately. If she cannot be reached or the situation seems emergent, call 911. Behavior that suggests it is an emergency includes (but not limited to) erratic or irrational behavior, apparent mental distress, inconsolable, aggressive, agitated, refuse to listen. If this occurs:

- Ask them to stay with you unless they pose a serious threat to you.
- If they leave, call 911 immediately.
- If the communication happens via phone, stay on the phone with them and jump to the "Phone Call" section of this document.

Also, in the mean (T-I-M-E), while you wait with them, consider the following:

T: Tough questions - Here are some examples, please bathe them in compassion:

- "Is there anything you're looking forward to this week?" (Looking for ways to offer hope)
- "Sometimes when people feel sad or hopeless, they consider ending it all. Do you feel like things would be better if you were not here?" (Research shows that asking these questions does not increase a person's risk of suicide-but it will help you know where they're at and how serious it is.)
- "Has anything major happened lately?" Try to see if there've been any major (especially devastating) life events/changes recently.
- Remind them they're not alone! They are important, they belong, they are needed!
- Remind them, first responders (police, EMS, etc.) have more education and training to better help them which is why it is necessary that you call(ed) them. Do your best to help them see why it is good and right to have emergency personnel respond. This needs to be communicated without a HINT of judgement.

I: Isn't confidential

- In a gentle way, remind them that you are there to support them, you can see their struggle, and because you love and care for them you cannot keep what they share a secret.
- Remember to be non-judgmental and care for the mental and emotional torture they're probably experiencing.

M: Minors require reporting

- If the person is a minor you need to let their parents know and direct them to do the following
 - Call for a Mobile Crisis Team at 877-626-1772
 - Or if the threat is more serious they can take them to UNC Hospital ER or Duke Hospital ER. These are farther away, but better for suicide prevention.
- However-if their parent(s) are not shown to be supportive or take these matters seriously, follow up with CPS/911 to ensure they are well cared for.

E: Encourage counseling and offer resources for the future

- Inquire if they are currently in counseling/therapy
- Encourage them to follow up with a counselor and offer accountability to that end.
- Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) Press 1 for Veterans or military members
- Chat at [SuicidePreventionLifeline.org](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

PHONE CALL

If the disclosure comes from a person on the phone please do the following.

1. Keep them on the phone, if there is another person/staff member present ask them to call 911. If you have no help to make a second phone call, try to do this yourself. If there are no other phone options available try to convince them to go to the ER themselves. Do the following before hanging up and calling 911.
2. Find out where they are-get an address or as specific a location as possible. Note what number they are calling from
3. Ask if there is anyone around them (family, friends, not strangers). If so-have them seek out that person and see if you can speak with them directly.
4. If you can speak to the person with them, advise them to take them to the ER, call the Mobile Crisis Unit, or 911 if that has not been done.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Document any encounter while the details are still fresh in your memory.
- Notify Senior Pastor, Matt Capps as well as Amber Henderson by phone and email a copy of your document to both.

- Self-care. Dealing with a situation like this can be difficult for anyone no matter how much experience they have. Take care to notice how well you're doing after the incident and find someone you can share with if you feel it would be good to process the event with someone. As always, my door is open! We are a team and we owe it to our Lord Jesus and our church body to care for them and ourselves well.