

### Checklist for Handling a Death of an Employee

#### Immediate Response and Communication

*If death (or serious accident/illness) occurs at work:*

- Call 911 or Campus Police at 863-5555
- Call employee's emergency contact person (call HR at 863-6595 if you do not have the information), or other known family member to advise of employee's being taken to the hospital
- Have a supervisor travel to hospital to meet family, if necessary
- Contact the Risk Management Unit at 863-7977, who will contact OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA if death/accident is work-related
- Notify employees/executives with most critical need-to-know information first, including HR.
- Notify the President's Office so that they can prepare a general news release within the University
- Upon death, notify remaining employees indicating, details will be forthcoming
- Follow existing internal procedures regarding contact with the media
- Be sensitive to family – ask for the name of a contact person who can provide funeral details when known, answer questions about the family's wishes and arrange for benefits procedures to be completed when appropriate. Notify HR immediately of the death.
- Designate an internal contact person for employees who have any questions or concerns to prevent employees from trying to contact the family directly

*If death occurs outside of work:*

- Notify the President's Office so that they can prepare a general news release within the University
- Notify employees/executives with most critical need-to-know information first, including HR
- Notify remaining employees indicating details will be forthcoming as available
- Be sensitive to family – ask for the name of a contact person who can provide funeral details when known and answer questions about the family's wishes and arrange for benefits procedures to be completed when appropriate. Notify HR immediately of the death.
- Designate an internal contact person for employees who have any questions or concerns to prevent employees from trying to contact the family directly
- Follow existing internal procedures regarding contact with the media

#### Handling Arrangements

- The department can send flowers with funds from their budgets based upon University rules set forth in policy #204- Appropriateness of Expenditures, V. 4. g. & k. Please read these sections for information regarding the death of an employee's spouse, parent or employee's child.
- Arrange to redirect phone, voicemail, email and mail communications
- Plan for counseling for employees through our EAP provider of Student Health Services for immediate services, if needed

- Provide grieving employees with time off as needed (immediately if they witnessed the death)
- Begin termination processing following normal procedures (see section on benefits below)
- Have designated contact person keep track of all notes, flowers, etc. that arrive following the death so they can be responded to and collected for the family.

*Planning for Funeral/Memorial Service*

- Flowers – determine where they are to be sent according to family's wishes. University funds can only be used according to policy #204.
- Donations –in lieu of flowers may not be made according to University policy. If individuals and departments within the University wish to send flowers or make other appropriate gestures of sympathy to the families at the time of death they should not do so at the University's expense.
- Time off – consider impact on University, but also recognize that many employees may feel a need to attend the service.
- Memorial fund/scholarship – contact *Institutional Advancement-College Marketing and Communications* regarding this option

*How do I help my employees handle the loss of their co-worker?*

- Notifying employees of the death of a co-worker can be one of the toughest jobs a supervisor ever has to do. While it is important that employees be notified promptly, it is also important that the supervisor carefully plan what to say.
- It is reasonable to expect that many, if not all, employees who worked with the deceased will be unable to complete their work the day of the announcement. This reaction should be anticipated and arrangements should be made to allow those who need time off to receive it. Human Resources and the supervisor need to make decisions about how any time off will be counted and compensated.
- It is important that those who desire to attend funeral/memorial services held in honor of the deceased be allowed to do so. This may require that a whole department close down for a morning or afternoon. The supervisor should arrange for office coverage in this event. The supervisor should find out when the services will be and send flowers when necessary.
- The supervisor should be sure to mention the EAP assistance program to employees in the days following their co-worker's death. (*Contact Human Resources regarding the EAP services.*) Be sensitive to the fact that many co-workers may have known the deceased on a personal level, and their grief may affect their behavior and performance.
- In most situations, the employee will have personal belongings at work. It may be difficult for co-workers to see these items removed. Make arrangements for a member of the employee's family to collect those items after a respectable amount of time has passed-have boxes and packing materials available.
- Lastly, replacing the deceased too quickly may make co-workers feel that the University did not value the contributions the deceased made. Consider having someone fill in on a temporary basis or leaving the position open for awhile.

**After the Funeral/Follow Up**

*Final Wages/Benefits Processing- Human Resources*

- Contact and schedule time to meet with beneficiaries
- Locate beneficiary designations for all benefits
- Confirm state law regarding final pay for deceased employees and associated tax issues and comply promptly with all rules – consult with tax advisors if necessary
- Treat accrued but unused vacation, sick, personal days, etc., in accordance with state law and University policy
- Determine how many certified death certificates will be needed to process benefits paperwork including: Life insurance, Accidental death and dismemberment, and other benefits programs
- Communicate to family any actions required for the pension payout
- Determine Workers Compensation death benefits, if applicable
- Terminate health insurance according to practice
- Determine balance of health care flexible spending account – for health expenses prior to date of death – notify family of procedure
- Handle COBRA paperwork for spouse/dependents

Other Considerations

- Department follows normal termination checklist to ensure all equipment, keys, credit cards, etc., are returned and security issues are addressed
- Department arranges for packing and delivery of personal belongings – ask family how they want this handled; offer to do it for them if preferred. A close colleague or supervisor is best choice if family prefers not to be involved.
- Department needs to be aware that employees may have a hard time using the deceased employee's desk or office – consider other uses for this space, if possible
- Department and HR keep in touch with family, as appropriate

**Sample Letter of Condolence to Family of Deceased Employee**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Although we realized that (name of employee) was seriously ill (or critically injured), the news of (his/her) death found us unprepared. The professional and personal relationship we had with (name of employee) has been a source of enrichment and enjoyment to all of us. We shall miss (name of employee) greatly.

(Name of employee) was held in the highest regard by our employees and by many other with whom he/she worked. (He/she) set an example that will continue to be an inspiration to all of us. Please accept our sincere sympathy for your loss.

We will be sending you benefit information shortly or you may call Human Resources for immediate attention at 801-863-8389 or 801-863-8704. In the meantime, please call me at (your telephone number) if you have any questions or if we may be of assistance.

Sincerely,

(your name & title)