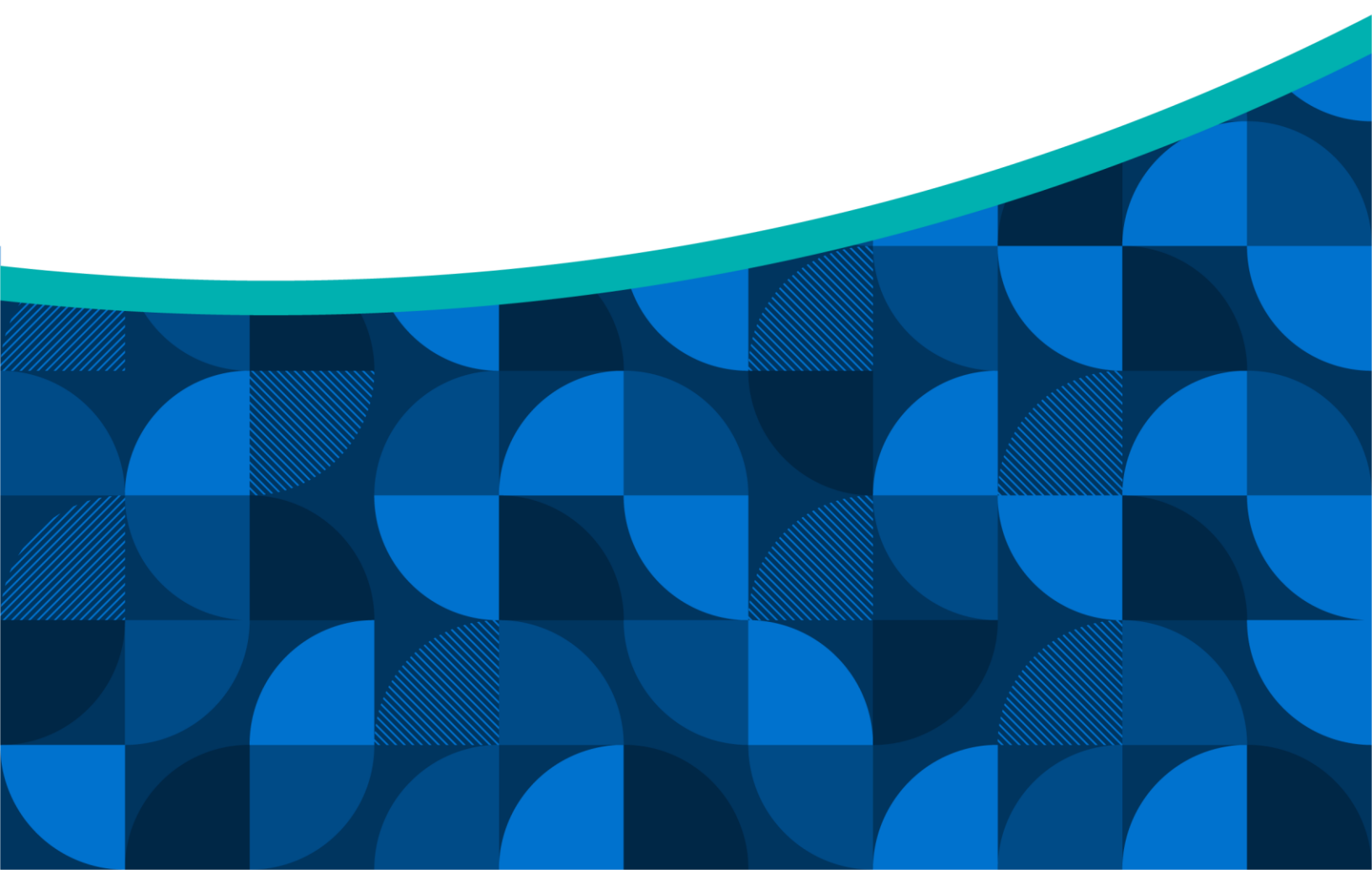




TOOLKIT

Preparing to Navigate Student Death

15 Tools to Ensure Institutional Readiness



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Prepare Your Student Death Response Now to Promote Campus Well-Being

Executive Summary

Unfortunately, student death is a matter of when, not if for university leaders. Institutions need to prepare in advance to meet their campus community's emotional needs and facilitate grieving and healing in the aftermath of a student death. Not having a comprehensive process or handling each situation as a standalone incident comes with an increased likelihood of mishandling the essential steps needed to support campus healing. When leaders center community well-being and prioritize consistency and timeliness in their response, they mitigate risks to student, faculty, and staff safety and avoid creating the perception that the institution values some student lives more than others.

EAB's research team found that planning your institution's student death response proactively can ensure an equitable and compassionate response, facilitate healthy grieving, and avoid flashpoints in the aftermath of a tragic student loss. When leaders prepare their student death response plan ahead of time and keep it up to date, they can avoid these seven common pitfalls:



Pitfalls in Institutional Responses to Student Death

- 1** Not having a formal protocol or having a protocol that is overly focused on administrative tasks.
- 2** Waiting until after a student death occurs to pull together the response team.
- 3** Assuming faculty, staff, and student leaders are aware of and know how to use the student death protocol.
- 4** Notifying a family that their student died instead of working with local authorities to do so.
- 5** Notifying the entire campus community with the same uniform message after every student death.
- 6** Assuming canceling classes is the best way to provide space for students, faculty, and staff to heal.
- 7** Taking a bespoke approach to memorials for each student death.

How to Use This Toolkit: Use this toolkit as you develop, update, and implement your student death response protocol, trainings, and associated policies.

This toolkit is a complement to EAB's whitepaper: *Navigating Student Death: A Best Practice Guide*. The tools are grouped in seven sections. Each section is aligned with a pitfall and suggests best practices that you can use to avoid those pitfalls.



Create and Update Your Student Death Protocol

TOOLS TO ADDRESS PITFALL

Tools in This Section:

- 1: Protocol Self-Editing Checklist
- 2: Student Death Response Feedback Template

1

Tool 1: Protocol Self-Editing Checklist

20 Questions to Ensure Preparedness

To implement a compassionate, consistent, and timely response to each case of student death, it is critical that institutions follow a set of planned steps and actions. It should be easy for staff to follow the protocol during high-stress times so they can save time, mitigate harm to the institutional community, and avoid flashpoints.

How to Use This Tool: Use this self-editing checklist to ensure your written protocol is complete and up-to-date. If you do not have a protocol codified in writing, use this checklist as a guide when writing and editing your protocol. See Appendix (p. 41) for sample protocols.

Student Death Protocol Criteria	Importance for Preparedness	Does Your Protocol Meet the Criteria?
Does your institution designate who will be on the core student death response team ?	<i>Establishing a core death response team ensures a consistent and comprehensive response. Identifying who will get called in on a case-by-case basis allows institutions to tailor the response for impacted groups' needs.</i>	
Are tasks in the student death protocol outlined by role or title instead of by name?	<i>Protocols that outline each team members' responsibilities help institutions save time and avoid duplicating efforts in the aftermath of a student death.</i>	
Have you created a role-specific tracking checklist or spreadsheet on a shared drive to keep the response team up to date in the aftermath of a death?	<i>Using a tracker helps student affairs leaders ensure all tasks have been completed and reduces the chances for duplicating efforts.</i>	
Are tasks in your student death protocol listed in order of priority ?	<i>Decision-making abilities are compromised during high-stress times. Prioritize tasks ahead of time to help staff avoid mistakes or skipping steps.</i>	
Have you assigned a student death response team leader or coordinator ? Does your protocol designate at least 3 backup coordinators ?	<i>Leaders may be sick or unavailable to respond when a death occurs. Designate multiple backups to avoid delays. Further, leading the response effort is emotionally taxing and can contribute to leader burnout and attrition.</i>	
Does your student death protocol establish the procedure for how to close a student's account , including withdrawal from classes, finalizing billing, and removing the student and family from fundraising initiatives and listservs?	<i>Most families have logistical questions about how to settle accounts after their student dies. Institutions who proactively handle student accounts tend to have a more compassionate response and better relationship with the family.</i>	
Does your student death protocol specify what activities your institution offers to promote healthy grieving ?	<i>Institutions who fail to give appropriate pathways for people to grieve can come across as uncaring and insensitive to students, faculty, and staff. Outlining these activities in advance helps center the institutional community's needs.</i>	

Protocol Self-Editing Checklist (cont.)

Student Death Protocol Criteria	Importance for Preparedness	Does Your Protocol Meet the Criteria?
<p>Does your protocol outline alternative protocols for circumstances that may alter your typical course of action (e.g., a death that occurs off campus or during a long break, how to repatriate the body)?</p>	<p><i>Protocols are intended to cover most cases, but sometimes there may be elements that require a unique approach. Leaders can save time by anticipating the "most common" uncommon scenarios and codifying them in the protocol.</i></p>	
<p>Does your protocol include contact information for the following legal partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law enforcement • Fire department • Hospitals • Crisis and grief counselors • Mental health professionals • Faith leaders 	<p><i>Community needs will vary based on the circumstances of the death. Having these contacts in place can speed up the process (e.g., if further investigation needs to be done by law enforcement) and allows institutions to more efficiently meet their community's needs.</i></p>	
<p>Does your protocol outline the family liaison's role and responsibilities?</p>	<p><i>This ensures that the family liaison can prepare for difficult conversations in advance and deploy support resources (e.g., student insurance information) to support the family's grieving process.</i></p>	
<p>Does your student death protocol codify who you will notify that a death has occurred and how?</p>	<p><i>This helps leaders know who is responsible for saying what and how that message will be shared</i></p>	
<p>Do you use pre-approved sample scripting to communicate about a student death with impacted students, faculty, and staff?</p>	<p><i>Pre-approved scripting helps leaders save time and avoid exacerbating equity issues by eulogizing well-known students.</i></p>	
<p>Do you have sample scripting for both in-person and written notifications that is tailored to individual audiences?</p>	<p><i>Bespoke communication centers each stakeholder groups' unique needs and highlights available resources (e.g., faculty & staff should get contact info for EAP).</i></p>	
<p>Does your sample scripting offer spaces for customization for each incident of student death?</p>	<p><i>This signals to the campus community that the deceased student was known and cared for by the institution.</i></p>	
<p>Does your student death protocol outline what grief and support resources are available to students, faculty, and staff?</p>	<p><i>Institutions can promote help-seeking behavior by clearly outlining available well-being resources.</i></p>	

Protocol Self-Editing Checklist (cont.)

Student Death Protocol Criteria	Importance for Preparedness	Does Your Protocol Meet the Criteria?
<p>Have you outlined how you will create streamlined pathways for impacted students, faculty, and staff to connect with the deceased’s family (e.g., Dean of Students’ office collects letters and gifts, share memorial service details with impacted groups)?</p>	<p><i>Stakeholders may want to connect with the deceased’s family as part of their individual grieving. However, it may overwhelm the family to receive numerous messages and gifts.</i></p>	
<p>Does your student death protocol outline your typical approach to return to normal function in the wake of a student death?</p>	<p><i>Grief literature indicates that returning to routines and activities promote healthy grieving and coping practices.</i></p>	
<p>Have you anticipated and outlined potential alternative programming to offer in the event you do opt to cancel classes due to extreme circumstances?</p>	<p><i>Offering alternative programming that focuses on community gathering and reflection helps impacted students, faculty, and staff process the death.</i></p>	
<p>Does your student death protocol refer to your written guidelines about what types of memorials your institution will facilitate (if any)?</p>	<p><i>Articulating the institution’s plans to facilitate memorials helps mitigate equity issues when responding to student deaths. Inconsistent memorial practices may cause the community to view the institution as valuing one life more than another.</i></p>	
<p>Does your student death protocol refer to your institution’s posthumous degree policy?</p>	<p><i>This signals to the family that the institution recognizes the student’s contributions and work.</i></p>	

Tool 2: Serious Incident Management Feedback Template

Guidance from the University of Bristol

How to Use This Tool: Use this template to collect process improvement feedback from the student death response team and prevention services staff. Student affairs staff should fill out Section 1 before distributing Sections 2 and 3 with relevant staff. Synthesize the feedback you collect to edit and improve your student death protocol and prevention services.

When to Use This Tool: Solicit feedback from your student death response team 4-6 weeks after each incident.



Serious Incident Review

Section 1

A. Name of Student

B. Student Number

C. Date of birth and age at time of incident

D. Gender

E. Course

F. School/Faculty

G. Mode of Study

H. Level of Study

I. Student accommodation type

- Institutional residence
- Partner/private home
- Family home

J. Student status at time of incident

- Active
- Suspended
- Withdrawn
- Graduated

K. Did the student's university application form indicate that the student had a potential vulnerability? Were mitigating circumstances or disability declaration noted?

L. University services which had contact with the student in their time at the institution

M. External services known to have contact with the student in their time at the institution

Serious Incident Management Feedback Template (cont.)

Serious Incident Review

Section 2

N. Type of incident

O. Date and time of incident

P. Location of incident

Q. Reviewer name and job title

R. Date of completion

Section 3

S. Timeline of prevention service interactions

Date	Service	Type of interaction	Content of interaction

T. Summary of events

U. What we did well when navigating this incident

V. Areas for future improvement

W. Recommendations for service improvements



Establish and Prepare Your Student Death Response Team

TOOLS TO ADDRESS PITFALL

Tools in This Section:

- 3: Sample Death Response Team Structures
- 4: Student Death-Focused Tabletop Exercises

2

Tool 3: Sample Death Response Team Structures

How to Use This Tool: Use this checklist during each incident of student death to ensure that you have included all necessary offices in your response team. Members of the Tier 1 team respond to all cases of student death, while members of the Tier 2 team get called in on an as-needed basis. Designate a leader and at least 3 backup coordinators.

Student Death Response Team Checklist

Tier 1 Response Team:	Tier 2 Response Team:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Vice President for Student Affairs <input type="checkbox"/> Dean of Students <input type="checkbox"/> Vice President for Student Affairs’ Chief of Staff, if applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing and Communications Officer <input type="checkbox"/> Campus Chaplain or Director of Spiritual and Religious Life Office <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling Center Director <input type="checkbox"/> Campus Safety Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Athletics Director <input type="checkbox"/> Advancement/Alumni Relations <input type="checkbox"/> IT <input type="checkbox"/> Registrar/Enrollment Services <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Deans <input type="checkbox"/> International Services and Study Abroad <input type="checkbox"/> Residential Life and Housing

Institutional Examples

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

See how [New York Tech](#) designates their student death response team to meet the needs of each campus and each unique incident.

Primary Response Team

- New York Tech campuses: Office of Campus Security
 - Long Island Residences: University police
 - New York City residences: 911
- Local law enforcement and emergency responders
- Office of the Dean of Students staff/coordinator of campus operations and student services staff

Secondary Response Team

- Office of Strategic Communications and External Affairs
- Office of Counseling and Wellness Services staff
- Office of Enrollment Services
- Office of Human Resources
- Office of the President
- Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs



See how [McMaster University](#) tailors their student death response with some individuals who respond to every death coupled with some who respond on a case-by-case basis.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean of Students (chair of the Response Team) • Director of the Student Support and Case Management Office (designate chair) • Assistant Dean of the Faculty • Communications and Public Affairs • Student Support and Case Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Wellness Centre • Consultants on an as needed basis (Housing and Conference Services, International Student Services, student groups, Indigenous Student Services, Equity and Inclusion Office, Chaplaincy, Intercultural Affairs Advisor, etc. as required) • Community Support and Outreach Coordinator (as needed) |
|--|---|

Source: McMaster University, "Protocol for the Response to a Student Death;" New York Institute of Technology, "Death;" EAB interviews and analysis.

Tool 4: Student Death Tabletop Exercises

Scenarios from Pennsylvania Western University

How to Use This Tool: Use tabletop exercises to help leaders prepare to navigate the decision-making process during emotionally intense times. Choose one of the prompts, below, for a tabletop exercise on student death with your cabinet, student death response team, and student affairs division. Follow the steps outlined in each prompt. Then, use the discussion questions to assess your institution's preparedness for future student deaths. As you facilitate these tabletop exercises, be mindful of the sensitive nature of the topics and offer a pre-meeting content warning to your team.



“Tabletop exercises are a tangible effort that allows the team to get comfortable by exposing them to the discomfort and crises on a smaller scale.”

Jim McGee, AVPSA, Pennsylvania Western University

Prompt 1:

Part 1

At 9:15 a.m. on Thursday, September 19, university police received a call for a male standing on top of an academic building. As campus police were responding, a second call was received stating that the male had jumped from the roof of the building. When officers arrived on scene, a male student was found apparently deceased outside of the building. Witnesses stated that the male had jumped from the roof, landing on the concrete adjacent to the front entrance of the building. Campus police established a perimeter around the scene and closed off exits from the building to the area. Campus police requested law enforcement and the coroner to respond to the scene. At this time, the male's identify is not known.

Chief of Police has contacted VP for Student Affairs and advised them of the incident.

What should be the first item completed?

Part 2

VP for Student Affairs notifies Member of Cabinet. The following information was provided to the Cabinet:

- Estimated time for the scene of approximately 4 hours
- Notification of next of kin has not been completed by Police
- Student has not yet been identified

Instructions for the Cabinet:

- Determine immediate need for campus communications
- Determine facility status
- Cancel classes? Campus events?
- Identify areas where support is needed.
- Initiate communications with campus community pending next of kin notification.
- Next meeting?

Instructions for the Death Protocol Team:

The Death Protocol Team will be assembled. This team will focus on:

- Assist in identifying the student involved

Once the student has been identified, the team focuses on:

- Identifying information regarding the deceased student (class schedule, activities, living arrangements, and roommates)
- Draft postvention e-mails based on information gleaned
- Wellness Services:
 - may requested for incident response
 - coordinate County Crisis Response
 - coordinate debriefs with student groups, classmates, and roommates of the deceased student

Student Death Tabletop Exercises (cont.)

Prompt 1 (cont.)

Part 3

Did your team address all of the following components? Determine who is responsible for coordinating each effort.

- Next of kin notification?
- Faculty notifications?
- Postvention notifications?
- Is the result of building status? Class status?
- Are there any ongoing sanitation concerns?
- What considerations are being made about student property? Are any search warrants needed?
- How are we handling media requests?
- Are there ongoing or pending investigations by local law enforcement?
- Have we scheduled support sessions for impacted students, faculty, and staff?
- Have we considered any vigils or other memorial activities?

Prompt 2:

Part 1

At 10:15 a.m. on Thursday, September 5, a male student athlete (John) was found deceased in his dorm room. His roommate and teammate (Rob) returned from class and found John on the floor of the common area of the suite. Rob observed what he believed to be a syringe in John's right arm and a bent spoon next to some white powder on the table in the common area. Rob had not been in the room since the prior evening when he left to stay with friends for the night. At the time when Rob left the room, John was with a female that he had been seeing for about a week and had advised they were staying in for the evening.

Rob contacts you as his coach and is frantic.

What actions should we be taking in response to the information we have at this time?

Instructions for the Individual:

- Advise Rob to call local emergency responders or do so for him
- Notify your supervisor (in this case, the Athletic Director)
- May contact Wellness Services in the event you believe Rob will need professional support
- May respond to the area to meet with Rob to offer support. However, you will need to decide if it is best to assist Rob or if you will be more effective in helping deal with making the team notification. Can you handle both?

Instructions for the Supervisor/Director:

- Notify VP of Student Affairs
- Participate as needed in the Death Notification Protocol

Instructions for the Cabinet:

- Determine immediate need for campus communication
- Determine groups to be notified per protocol
- Initiate communications with campus community pending next of kin notification

Student Death Tabletop Exercises (cont.)

Prompt 2 (cont.)

Part 2

The coach decides to respond to the scene to provide support for Rob. Campus police are already on scene and secure the suite. Emergency responders arrive on scene at 10:35 and the coroner arrives at 10:45 a.m. At 10:50, campus police approach Rob and ask him questions about John's girlfriend. Rob does not know much, as the female and John have only been seeing each other for about a week. Rob thinks the female is in a sorority and works as a student worker for housing or student affairs. The Police advise that they located 2 phones in the suite and a female's purse, but the purse had no identification inside. They ask Rob if he knows anything further about the female and he states he believes she lives in a separate residence hall.

Who should be contacted about the missing female in danger?

What steps would be taken to locate and identify this female based on the information presented?

Instructions for Police and Administration:

- Contact Residence Life and Dean of Students Office to attempt to locate female
- Gather physical description of female
- AVP for Residence Life may contact Area Coordinators and conduct CA/Student staff check in
- Dean of Students may contact Greek Life Staff and make inquiries
- Search of residence hall
- Update Cabinet

Instructions for Death Protocol Team:

- Identify groups and draft communication for John's death
- Determine who is available for notification

Instructions for the Cabinet:

- Determine immediate need for campus communication regarding missing/endangered female

Part 3

At approximately 13:30, University Police receive a call for a female down in the women's restroom in the residence hall. University Police respond and locate a deceased female in the women's restroom on the first floor. The female matches the description of the missing female and is identified as a resident of the hall who Housing Staff had not been able to contact. The female is a sophomore student athlete who was a housing student worker.

What actions should we be taking in response to the information we have at this time?

Identify the groups that may need outreach in regard to this incident.

Instructions for the Individual:

- Female was found by custodian
- Notify the Athletic Director
- May contact HR in the event you believe the reporting person will need professional support
- Notify Facilities Director regarding employee

Instructions for the Supervisor/Director:

- Notify Vice President of Student Affairs
- Participate as needed in Death Notification Protocol

Student Death Tabletop Exercises (cont.)

Prompt 2 (cont.)

Part 3 (cont.)

Instructions for the Cabinet:

- Determine immediate need for campus communication
- Determine groups to be notified per protocol
- Initiate communications with campus community pending next of kin notification

Part 4

First notification will be made to next of kin by law enforcement. **Once they have been contacted, who would be next?**

- Roommates
- Teammates, members of student organizations
- Student co-workers
- Professors
- Classmates

Additional concerns:

- Roommates' living arrangements
- Group support for teammates, friends, other group sessions
- Coaches to monitor and be monitored for mental health concerns



Increase Cross-Campus Awareness of the Student Death Protocol

TOOLS TO ADDRESS PITFALL

3

Tools in This Section:

- 5: Student Death Protocol Awareness Resources
- 6: Crisis Management Training Template
- 7: Sample Student Death Resources for Instructors

Tool 5: Student Death Protocol Awareness Resources

How to Use This Tool: Improve accessibility of information about your student death protocol by creating and distributing an overview of your typical student death response process. This can be done through a designated landing page on your website. Be sure to include your typical notification practice, a list of available support services, and a disclaimer outlining the circumstances that may reshape your approach.

Examples: University of Washington, University of North Carolina Provide Information on Their Typical Student Death Response Process and Support Resources

The screenshot shows the University of Washington website. The main heading is "Resources in the Event of a Student Death". Below it is a sub-heading "Deceased Student Notices". The text explains that the Office of the Vice President for Student Life serves as the official point of notification. It also provides contact information: stulife@uw.edu or 206-543-4972. There is a section titled "How Should I Respond?" which discusses the need for emotional support and provides guidance on how to respond to requests. At the bottom, there is a section titled "UW's Typical Process in the Event of a Student Death" which states that several factors determine what happens in the hours and days following a death.

The screenshot shows the University of North Carolina website. The main heading is "STUDENT DEATH PROTOCOL". Below it is a paragraph explaining that the protocols are intended to guide and support staff, faculty, and student employees. There is a sub-heading "Responding to a Student Death" with a paragraph stating that the University strives to foster a culture of compassion and care. Below this is another paragraph explaining that the death of any student affects the University community. At the bottom, there is a list of sections: "General Guidelines", "Specific Protocols", "Guidance for Faculty and Staff", "Posthumous Degrees and Certificates of Attendance", "Requests for Information and Media Contacts", and "General Communications Guidance".

Web Page Highlights

- **Outlines Typical Process:** Clearly outlines the process the institution typically follows in the event of a student death, including the typical sequence of events and their notification protocol.
- **Outlines Atypical Factors:** Lists circumstances that may cause UW to stray from their typical student death protocol, such as the family's wishes and the nature of the incident.
- [See full page here.](#)

Web Page Highlights

- **Centers Community Well-being:** Directly states commitment to promoting well-being, compassion, and sensitivity throughout the response process.
- **Provides Audience-Specific Resources:** Faculty and staff receive resources after each death that outline their responsibilities, how to refer students to clinical support, talking points to use with students, and options for grading and attendance accommodations.
- [See full page here.](#)

Source: University of Washington, "Resources in the Event of a Student Death"; University of North Carolina, "Student Death Protocol"; EAB interviews and analysis.

Tool 6: Crisis Management Training Template

Guidance for Greek Life Leaders from the University of South Carolina

Train faculty, staff, and student leaders in crisis management best practices so you can rely on them to manage the notification process, identify impacted students, deploy resources, and mitigate the spread of misinformation.

How to Use This Tool: Use this template to develop your own crisis management training for faculty, staff, and student leaders. Adapt each training to fit the audience’s specific needs.

Key Components of USC’s Crisis Management Training

- ▶ **What are the steps of a crisis response?**
 - Identify and evaluate the threat (call 911 or campus police).
 - Deescalate the situation when appropriate.
 - Develop a plan/designate roles and responsibilities.
 - In general, stop all external communications outside of the university or law enforcement.
 - Ask for help when needed.
 - Group support for teammates, friends, other group sessions
 - Coaches to monitor and be monitored for mental health concerns

- ▶ **Who is your first call as a _____ (faculty member, staff member, student leader)?**

- ▶ **What is your primary responsibility as a _____ (faculty member, staff member, student leader)?**


- ▶ **What resources are available to you?**

- ▶ **How do you deal with the media?**

KNOW YOUR RESOURCES

Who is your first call as a chapter leader?

- If emergency with threat to safety, 911 or campus police
- *Calculated risk:* When should we contact the university
- *Calculated risk:* Contacting your advisor or nationals before contacting the university
- First call to the university should be your council advisor



Chapter leaders can quickly identify what first steps to take in the event of an emergency. Include key emergency contact information for campus administrators.

Chapter leaders know what decisions (calculated risks) they may need to make to mobilize support.

Tool 7: Sample Student Death Resources for Instructors

Stanford University's "Responding to Student Deaths" Webpage

Faculty and staff are well-positioned to identify students who need individualized support and connect them to resources. Empower faculty and staff to better support students in the aftermath of the death by sharing resources with talking points and guidance on what not to say, options for attendance and grading accommodations, and contact information for institutional resources.

How to Use This Tool: Refer to these sample resources when designing student death-specific resources for faculty and staff. These resources will supplement your red folder.

The logo for Stanford University, featuring the word "Stanford" in a large, red, serif font above the word "University" in a smaller, red, serif font.

See how [Stanford University](#) shares internal and external resources with instructors and teaching assistants to help them support grieving students.

Responding to Student Deaths Webpage

Recommendations for instructors and teaching assistants for supporting students through grief and mourning

This webpage is intended to support instructors and teaching assistants (TAs) as they engage with their students following the death of a Stanford student.

Classes in which the student was enrolled or departments in which they majored will be contacted directly for additional guidance. If you are the instructor or TA of a class in which a deceased student was enrolled and have not received specific guidance about how to proceed following the death of a student, please contact your respective dean's office.

Attend to your own well-being

Practice self-care

Everyone experiences grief and loss differently: [give yourself space to process](#), whether in a community or on your own. This is important for both your and your students' well-being.

Use Stanford resources

Make use of relevant university resources such as:

- [Graduate Life Office](#) (if you are a graduate student or work with graduate students)
- Wellness Information Network for Graduate Students ([WINGS](#))
- [Vaden Health Services](#)
 - Counseling and Psychological Services ([CAPS](#)) for all students
- [Faculty Staff Help Center](#) for lecturers and faculty
- [Office of Religious and Spiritual Life](#) for faculty, staff, and students

Clarify your role

[Clarify your role](#) for yourself and your students. You might say something like: "As your instructor, I care about your well-being. I'm not a trained grief counselor. However, I can help connect you to resources for further support."

This clarification may be especially important for younger, women-identified, non-binary, and/or racially underrepresented instructional staff, who may face more requests for support from students than their overrepresented peers. You do not need to be a therapist for your students; instead, connect them with existing [resources](#).

Acknowledge the death with students and your teaching team

Use email to communicate about your course

Duplicate emails that acknowledge a student's death and list resources can add to students' stress and trauma. They will already receive such emails from university leadership, so the primary benefit of an email from instructional staff following a student's death is to communicate clearly about flexible options in the course (see below for ideas about flexibility to meet students' needs). If you want to acknowledge a student's death in writing, you can consult this [email template to address a student's death](#).

Sample Student Death Resources for Instructors (cont.)

Acknowledge the death with students and your teaching team

Acknowledge the death in class or section

Students generally appreciate it when their instructors acknowledge current events that may be affecting them in the classroom; at the same time, keep in mind that some students may find it difficult or may not wish to participate in a discussion about a student's death in class.

If you take a moment in class to verbally acknowledge the passing of a community member, you do not have to say the perfect thing. The following recommendations may be helpful in acknowledging a student's passing:

- State your intention in acknowledging the death
 - For example, you might say “I want to acknowledge [student name]’s passing because I know it affects us all in different ways and I care about your well-being and your learning.”
 - Dr. Shashank Joshi, from the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, offered these possible [first 100 words](#) following a student's death.
- Respect the privacy of the deceased
 - If the university has not made a statement about the death, it may be because leadership is waiting to discuss the announcement with the student's family or for the go-ahead from local authorities such as the coroner. In a case like this, you can acknowledge the death and the fact that more information is not available at this time.
 - There are cases in which a student's family members do not wish to disclose the cause of death publicly, particularly if a student died by suicide. Please avoid speculating or sharing any rumors beyond what the university has communicated.
- Be mindful when discussing suicide
 - If the topic of suicide does arise, [responsible suicide reporting guidelines](#) advise against sharing too much detail.
- Request a trained facilitator
 - If you would like a facilitator to visit your class or section and help the group process loss, contact the Graduate Life Office.
- Consider offering time to speak individually
 - Consider announcing that you'll stay after class for a few minutes to provide time for students to connect with you individually. This can help identify students who may need referral for additional support.
- Consider community losses
 - Sometimes a loss in the broader community may warrant the need to process grief. There are guidelines and sample lesson plans available in the [ACT to Sustain Learning Through Current Events](#) resource.
- Make all conversations optional
 - Students may have a range of responses and inclinations to engage in such a lesson while grieving; please make such an activity optional and allow students to opt out easily, without drawing attention to themselves (e.g., end the formal part of class early, allowing students to leave or remain for further conversation).

Support Teaching Assistants

Coordinate with your teaching team to ensure a unified approach. If you are working with TAs, please be conscious of their needs and provide flexibility for them including redistributing responsibilities among the teaching team or requesting resources for an additional TA from your department.

If you are a teaching assistant, consider suggesting possible course policy modifications to the primary instructor and requesting flexibility for yourself and fellow TAs. Consider this e-mail template to suggest possible course [modifications](#).

Sample Student Death Resources for Instructors (cont.)

Arrange to meet students' needs

Provide flexible options

Provide flexible options at the course level when possible, communicate about these options with the teaching team, and share these changes with the class, documenting them in a place where students can refer back to them (e.g., an updated syllabus or Canvas site).

As students' cognitive capacity will likely be reduced following stress and trauma (Boals et al., 2012), the flexible options below may help improve overall performance in the class and provide compassionate support. If these types of options already exist in your course, remind students about them. In either case, please be clear about timelines and expectations if you need assistance deciding on appropriate course modifications you can [request a consultation](#) with CTL.

Here are some flexibility options you may consider:

- Extensions on assignments
- Options to revise and resubmit assignments
- Dropping the lowest grade in a group of assignments
- Additional review sessions for midterms and exams
- Revised schedules to revisit class material at a later date or to eschew material not directly related to your core learning goals
- Optional attendance on some days and alternative ways for students to make up the work, such as discussion posts or assignments submitted through Canvas
- Options for community building in class (e.g., opening check-ins with an option to pass or the option to work with a partner on an activity)
- Information on how to request an [incomplete grade](#) if a student doesn't feel able to complete the coursework
- A reminder that if a student has a documented condition that is exacerbated by the stress of a student's death, they should consult with the [Office of Accessible Education](#).

Make use of Stanford resources

Prepare to discuss and respond to students' well-being throughout their grieving process. The [Red Folder](#) provides guidelines on how to navigate difficult conversations with students:

- [Say What You See](#)
- [Show You Care](#)
- [Hear Them Out](#)
- [Know Your Role](#)
- [Connect to Help](#)

Familiarize yourself with the [Red Folder](#)'s recommended points of contact to request help for a student. [...]

Learn more

Stanford CTL resources [...]

Trade press and resources from other institutions

- [What to Say After a Student Dies](#)
- [How to Listen Less](#)
- [Teaching in Times of Crisis](#)



Prepare Your Family Liaison to Support the Grieving Process

TOOLS TO ADDRESS PITFALL

Tools in This Section:

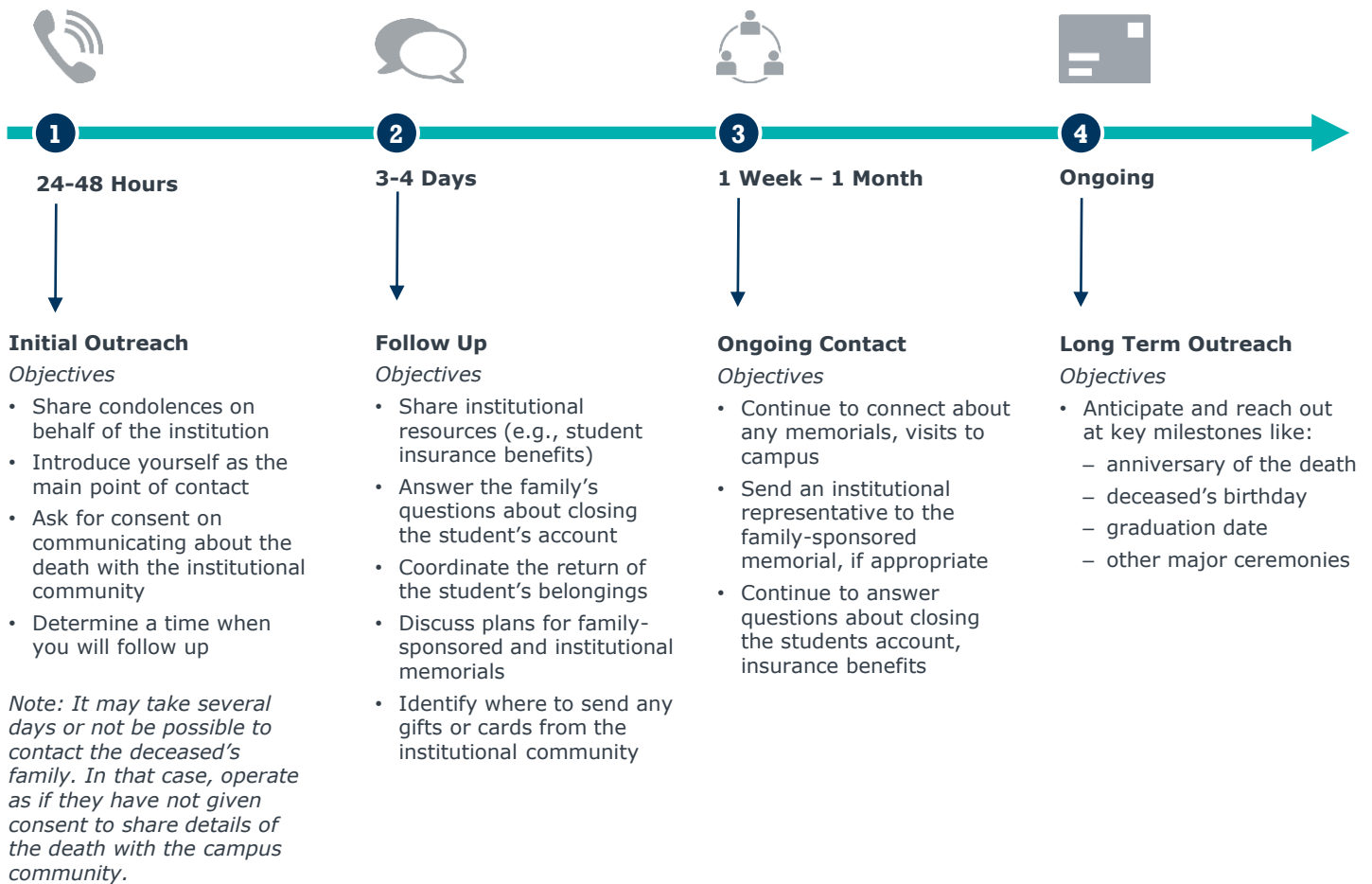
- 8: Family Liaison Timeline
- 9: Sample Posthumous Degree Policies

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Tool 8: Family Liaison Timeline

Share resources with the family liaison to support them during emotionally charged conversations and to educate them about what institutional resources are available to the deceased student’s family.

How to Use This Tool: Share this timeline with your family liaison before they reach out to the family. This timeline guides the family liaison’s calls after they confirm that local authorities have notified the family of the death. Adjust this timeline and tailor your approach to meet the needs, desires, cultural, and spiritual considerations of each family.



Anticipate Common Questions

- May I visit campus?
- How do I collect my student’s belongings?
- How much do I owe, and how do I pay outstanding bills?

Tool 9: Sample Posthumous Degree Policies

It is meaningful for many families to have something from the institution that recognizes the student's contributions. This type of recognition can provide the family with great closure and comfort. Codify eligibility criteria for posthumous degrees and awards for undergraduate and graduate students. Work with academic affairs leaders and the faculty senate to create a posthumous degree policy, including academic standing and course completion status. Consider alternate options (e.g., certificate of attendance) for ineligible students. If possible, make a certificate that strongly resembles a diploma.

How to Use This Tool: Refer to these sample policies as you create and edit your own posthumous degree policies. Remember to get your Provost and faculty senate's approval on the policy.

Institutional Examples



Key Elements

- Provides explicit instructions for the President, Provost, and Registrar to award degrees and certificates
- Includes annual training requirements for department chairs and deans

[Access the policy online](#)

Definitions

Posthumous Recognition: Awarding the degree or certificate at commencement after the death of a student.

Contacts [...]

Stakeholders [...]

Policy Contents: Posthumous Recognition

Norfolk State University is committed to enhancing student success and supporting our students in the pursuit of quality academic instruction and graduation. We realize that unfortunate circumstances may arise which make it impossible for deserving students to complete the requirements for a college diploma and/or commencement exercises. Degrees or certificates may be awarded to an immediate family member of a student who dies or is near death due to illness or accident while progressing satisfactorily toward the completion of a degree program at Norfolk State University.

Procedures and Criteria

Upon a request by the student's immediate family or the student's major department and within one year following the death of a student who has been enrolled in a program of study at NSU, the University may award a posthumous degree or certificate of attendance if the following conditions are met:

1. The department chair of the student's major program of study presents the academic record and recommendation for awarding the degree to the respective college/school dean.
2. The dean concurs with the recommendation and forwards it in writing along with supporting documentation (academic audit, proof of death, etc.) to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.
3. The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs transmits the file to the Office of the Registrar for review.
 1. A degree will be recommended if the student:
 1. Has completed all requirements for the degree.
 2. Had been enrolled in the courses that, upon successful completion, would have culminated in the awarding of the degree.
 3. Maintained a minimum 2.00 GPA (Undergraduate) or 3.00 (Graduate).
 2. A certificate of attendance may be recommended if the above conditions are not satisfied.

Sample Posthumous Degree Policies (cont.)

Procedures and Criteria (cont.)

4. Once the Registrar confirms the academic data, the request for posthumous recognition is made to the University President by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.
5. If the President approves the request and a degree will be awarded; the student's name along with the designation "awarded posthumously" will be forwarded to the Chair of the Commencement committee for inclusion in the Commencement Program. If a certificate of attendance will be presented, this information is also sent to the Chair of the Commencement Committee for inclusion in the Commencement Program.
6. The name and address of the immediate family member will also be forwarded to the Chair of the Commencement Committee so that the family can be contacted, and arrangements can be made with regards to parking, seating, etc.
7. The deceased student's family will be permitted to participate, upon timely arrival, in the commencement exercises in which the deceased student would have been eligible to participate.
8. If a diploma is to be issued, the diploma will be mailed to the person legally responsible for managing the deceased student's affairs.

Education and Compliance

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs shall be responsible for training the department chairs and deans on the requirements of this policy on an annual basis or as needed. Records of training will be maintained in the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

To ensure conformity to the requirements of this policy, the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will monitor for compliance with this policy by ensuring compassionate sensitivity to others. Failure to comply with this policy would amount to disregard for individual commitment and efforts cut short by death or unforeseen circumstances.

Publication [...]

Review Schedule [...]

Related Documents [...]

Forms [...]



Key Elements

- Provides clear distinctions for graduate and undergraduate eligibility criteria, including research requirements
- Offers flexibility to align with institutional mission and culture

Posthumous Degree Awards

The faculty may recognize the accomplishments of students who have died while pursuing their educational goals. If it is reasonable to expect that the student would have completed his or her degree requirements, the faculty may award a Baccalaureate or Graduate Degree that is in all ways identical to the degree the student was pursuing. Alternatively, the faculty may award a Posthumous BS, MS, or PhD to commemorate students who distinguished themselves while at Mines by bringing honor to the School and its traditions.

Sample Posthumous Degree Policies (cont.)

Posthumous Degree Awards (cont.)

Consideration for either of these degrees begins with a petition to the Faculty Senate from an academic department or degree granting unit. The petition should identify the degree sought. In the event that the degree-granting unit is seeking a conventional degree award, the petition should include evidence of the reasonable expectations that the student would have completed his or her degree requirements. For a Baccalaureate, such evidence could consist of, but is not limited to:

- The student was a senior in the final semester of coursework.
- The student was enrolled in courses that would have completed the degree requirements at the time of death.
- The student would have passed the courses with an acceptable grade and would likely have fulfilled the requirements of the degree.

For a Graduate Degree:

- For graduate degrees not requiring a research product, the student was enrolled in courses that would have completed the degree requirements at the time of death, would have passed the courses with an acceptable grade, and would likely have fulfilled the requirements of the degree.
- For graduate degrees requiring a research product, the student had completed all course and mastery requirements pursuant to the degree and was near completion of the dissertation or thesis, and the student's committee found the work to be substantial and worthy of the degree.

The requirement that there be a reasonable expectation of degree completion should be interpreted liberally and weight should be given to the judgment of the departmental representative(s) supporting the petition.

In the event that the degree being sought is a Posthumous BS, MS, or PhD, the petition should include evidence that the student conducted himself or herself in the best tradition of a Mines' graduate and is therefore deserving of that honor.



Center Well-Being in Your Notification Practices

TOOLS TO ADDRESS PITFALL

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Tools in This Section:

10: Checklist to Identify Impacted Groups

11: Death Notification Sample Messages

Tool 10: Checklist to Identify Impacted Groups

Leaders can mobilize support resources more efficiently by proactively determining which groups are important to notify that a student death has occurred.

How to Use This Tool: Use the checklist below to ensure you notify and mobilize resources to all faculty, staff, and students who may be impacted by a student death efficiently. Add this checklist to your student death protocol. Once you have decided who to notify and what resources to share, move to Tool 10 for sample scripting you can use to meet the needs of each audience.



Checklist to Identify Impacted Groups

Have you made plans to notify the deceased's:

- Roommates
- Friends, including any significant others
- Student groups/organizations, including athletic teams
- Classmates
- Relationships mentioned in case management notes, if applicable
- Professors
- Academic department
- Residence hall and residential staff, if applicable
- Academic advisor(s)
- Counselor and/or case manager, if applicable
- Co-workers and supervisors, if applicable

Tool 11: Death Notification Sample Messages

Pre-approved scripts and templates help leaders save time, ensure consistency, and center student, faculty, and staff's emotional needs in the aftermath of a student death.

How to Use This Tool: Use these templates to craft communications to students, faculty, and staff. Remember, these templates may need to be adjusted based on the family's wishes, any ongoing investigations, and the circumstances of the death. Be sure to run your scripting by your counsel before sending it out.

For Impacted Students:

To: Undergraduate students
Subject: Death of a Student

Dear students,

It is with great sadness that we write to inform you of the loss of a member of our [Institution name] community, [deceased student name], a [first/second/third/fourth] year in the [school or department name], who died on [date].

[Add a maximum of 3 sentences to discuss the deceased's campus involvement.]

University staff have been in contact with [deceased]'s family to offer support during this difficult time. If you would like to express your condolences or send a gift to the family, contact the office of the Dean of Students, which will collect these on the family's behalf.

The loss of [deceased] will be felt deeply by many in our community, and we ask that you seek opportunities to help and uplift one another in the coming days. Those who may need support are encouraged to take advantage of the resources listed below.

Sincerely,
[Your name]
[Title]

Resources:

- [Add contact information and hours for the counseling center, BIT/CARE teams, religious and spiritual life office, and other available well-being resources.]

Gather this information as you notify impacted groups. Consult the deceased's friends, roommates, classmates, professors, and the student organization database.

Death Notification Sample Messages (cont.)

For Impacted Faculty and Staff:

Add this message as a topper and share your student email with faculty and staff.

To: Impacted Faculty and Staff
Subject: Death of a Student

Dear Faculty and Staff,

We are deeply saddened to share the following message that was sent to our [graduate/undergraduate] students today regarding [deceased's name], a [first/second/third/fourth year] in the [school/department], who died on [date].

[Deceased] was an engaged member of the student body, and [his/her/their] passing is a loss that will be felt by many in our community.

We are providing support to [deceased]'s family and to our students during this challenging time. For faculty and staff who may be looking for support, the university, through the [link to EAP], provides private and confidential services free of charge, including counseling and referrals.

We thank you for your continued support of our students and each other.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Title]

[Copy student message here]

Death Notification Sample Messages (cont.)

For the Cabinet:

Share the news of the death, what actions you have taken, and what plans are upcoming with the cabinet.

To: Cabinet
Cc: Student Service Departments
Subject: Death of a Student

Hello Team –

Unfortunately, we have learned of the passing of one of our new transfer students. [Student's name] was a [department] major and also a member of the [list primary activities] team, and [he/she/they] died yesterday morning.

As you all know, we have a very structured process for responding to student death. I wanted to share with you the steps that are being taken and other key information:

- [How you learned of the incident.]
- [Overview of interactions with the family.]
- [Student's name] was currently enrolled in [number] courses.
- [Advisor's name] was [student's name]'s academic advisor, and [his/her/their] faculty and deans will be notified of the passing and will be offered appropriate resources today.
- A message is being sent to all [impacted campus groups] letting them know and sharing these resources as well.
 - Res Life impact – we are reaching out to [his/her/their] roommates and offering support resources.
 - Athletics impact – the members of the [sport] team will be invited to a notification and support session.
- [Other completed and upcoming actions, e.g., the family coming to campus to retrieve the student's belongings.]
- [Who is responsible for monitoring incoming requests and deploying additional services, as needed.]
- Per the Death Protocol process, we are notifying all appropriate student service departments via cc on this message. For your awareness, here is that list. Please connect with your areas if the lead isn't listed here. [Sample list – adjust as needed.]
 - Office of the President
 - Office of the Provost
 - Communications and Marketing
 - IT/Computing Services
 - Residence Life and Housing
 - Dean of Students
 - Center for Wellness/Counseling Center
 - Office of the Registrar
 - Admissions
 - Student Financial Services
 - Advancement Office
 - Public Safety/University Police
 - Dean of College in which the student was enrolled, 1) Advisor, 2) Professors
 - If applicable, 1) Athletics, 2) Study Abroad/International Programs and Services

Death Notification Sample Messages (cont.)

For Impacted Student Athletes:

Share the news of the death and support resources with student athletes. This template may be adapted for other student groups and organizations.

To: Team
Cc: Athletic Director, Coaches
Subject: Death of a Student

Hello,

We are writing to express deepest support and sorry for the loss of your friend and/or fellow athlete, [student athlete name]. We would like you to know that we are here to help you with whatever you may need during this time of loss.

Wellness Services is offering open times to talk in a group setting led by [facilitator name]. This is open to anyone who may want to attend/participate.

Date:
Time:
Location:

Should any student need additional assistance such as grief counseling during this time, please be sure to direct them to [Wellness and Counseling Services] at [contact information]. Students can also receive support through [external counseling services and contact information] or the National Crisis Textline by texting "Home" to 741 741.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Title]



Need More Guidance on Notification Scripting?

Consult Postvention Experts' Scripts

- [Higher Education Mental Health Alliance: Postvention: A Guide for Response to Suicide on College Campuses](#)
- [Universities UK: Communications following the sudden death of a student](#)
- [American Association of Suicidology: A Manager's Guide to Suicide Postvention in the Workplace](#)



Promote Healthy Grieving and Resilience

TOOLS TO ADDRESS PITFALL

Tools in This Section:

12: Class Cancellation Decision Guide

13: Grief Support Session Sample Outline

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Tool 12: Class Cancellation Decision Guide

Holding classes promotes resilience among grieving students, faculty, and staff. Resilience is "the ability of adults who are exposed to an isolated and potentially highly disruptive event, such as the death of a close relation, to maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning" (Bonanno, 1994). Students who maintain normal routines after loss are better equipped to develop healthy coping skills. Consider how your decision to cancel classes helps or hinders students' resilience. EAB does not recommend canceling classes except in extreme circumstances.

How to Use This Tool: If you are not sure whether this is an extreme circumstance, use these questions with your cabinet and student death response team to help determine whether to cancel classes in the wake of a student death. Regardless of whether you cancel classes, offer group and individual support sessions for students, faculty, and staff. Consider hosting these sessions during the day and in the evening to provide options that suit a variety of schedules. *For more information on how to structure these sessions, see Tool 13 (p. 37).*

Class Cancellation Decision Guide

- Is there an ongoing threat to campus safety and security?
- Was there a widespread threat to campus safety when the death occurred (e.g., was this an instance of mass violence)?
- Are there sanitation or facilities-related considerations that make us unable or unsafe to hold classes as usual?
- Can we offer programming throughout the day in place of classes (e.g., group support sessions, counseling center drop-in hours, meetings with external crisis or grief counselors)? *Keep in mind this programming must be optional and should focus on community gathering, reflection and processing, and connection to support.*


If the answer is no to these questions, you should not cancel classes.

Tool 13: Grief Support Session Sample Outline

CU Boulder’s Guidance for Supporting Groups and Teams After a Traumatic Event

Group support sessions can help faculty, staff, and students, including members of the student death response team, begin to process the death and identify their own well-being needs. Host optional single sessions that focus on the psychoeducation of grief, emphasize self-care practices, and minimize additional impact. Offer this type of support session in place of traditional debriefing.

How to Use This Tool: Use this sample outline to lead an optional group support session for impacted students, faculty, and staff after a student death or other traumatic event. These sessions can be led by any campus leader, not just those with clinical or pastoral care backgrounds. Before implementing these sessions, prepare session leaders to provide referrals to follow-up resources such as individual counseling as needed.

 University of Colorado **Boulder**
Q

Guidance for Supporting Groups and Teams After a Traumatic Event Webpage

Following Up With a Team or Group After a Death or Traumatic Event

While we want to support students and staff requests for space to discuss these experiences, we want to be mindful that staff/faculty need to avoid imposing any program of “debriefing” onto any students/staff or group of students/staff. Avoid gathering people in a big group to talk about how they are feeling or how they are impacted as that typically creates more heightened emotions and can even delay recovery.



Sample outline for leading a support session

<p>1. Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the purpose of the optional meeting Acknowledge the event Establish ground rules, which could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening to understand Avoiding judgment Being conscientious of others Avoid interrupting 	<p>2. Shared understanding</p> <p>Provide factual information about what has occurred (this part is not graphic in nature but a brief description).</p>	<p>3. Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is not about what occurred but the now Participants could share one or two words on impact. Avoid more than a 1-2 word check-ins and this should be optional. Facilitator normalizes responses and provides education around how impact can vary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mention how not all people are always impacted and how impact can vary from person to person. Also mention that there can be potential future impacts that may not be present now and say this is all normal and ok.
<p>4. Strategies for Coping and self-care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants can share their strategies for coping Facilitators can then provide self-care activities to try and free self-care ideas Sometimes people forget to take care of themselves, so focus on self-care and remind them it’s ok to take breaks. 	<p>5. Mobilization of social supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify informal (friends, family) and formal (counseling, church) resources for ongoing support 	<p>6. Wrap up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thank participants for attending Acknowledge experiences, impact, and strengths Provide opportunities for individual follow-up Share campus resources

Source: University of Colorado Boulder, “[Guidance for Supporting Groups and Teams After a Traumatic Event](#)”; EAB interviews and analysis.



Establish Equitable Memorialization Guidelines

TOOLS TO ADDRESS PITFALL

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Tools in This Section:

- 14: Memorialization Guidelines Editing Checklist
- 15: Community Remembrance Examples

Tool 14: Memorialization Guidelines Editing Checklist

Institutions who establish guidelines and policies to facilitate healthy grieving have more equitable and consistent responses to student deaths, can be flexible when appropriate, and keep student well-being at the center of their work. Establish memorialization guidelines to achieve consistency and mitigate inequities in your response. As you consider what memorials are feasible and appropriate for your institution, keep in mind that student groups will want to implement small-scale memorial activities. Determine in advance how you will support those groups.

How to Use This Tool: Use this self-editing checklist to review your memorialization guidelines. If you do not have memorialization guidelines, use this checklist as an outline of key components.

Memorialization Guidelines Criteria	Importance for Preparedness	Does Your Protocol Meet the Criteria?
Do your memorialization guidelines outline memorial activities that are feasible and those that are not feasible at your institution?	<i>Institutions that clarify appropriate pathways for faculty, staff, and students to process and support impacted community members tend to be seen as more compassionate and avoid flashpoints.</i>	
Do your memorialization guidelines designate who will facilitate memorials on your campus?	<i>Students should always play a central role in planning and implementing memorial activities to help them express and cope with difficult feelings and to draw on the support of peers and adults in the institutional community. Institutions can support students by facilitating these memorials.</i>	
Have you specified a budget that can be used to support memorial activities on your campus (e.g., to cover room rental fees)?	<i>Clarifying the budget in advance helps save time and mitigate inequities between student organizations. Review state funding regulations for memorials to ensure you are compliant.</i>	
Do your guidelines outline how to handle spontaneous memorials (e.g., they are timebound, how to handle any physical items)?	<i>Leaving spontaneous memorials up for too long and end up prevents the community from reacclimating and returning to normal function.</i>	
Do your guidelines address how you will support the student and family's cultural and spiritual norms regarding death in any memorials you facilitate?	<i>This helps the deceased's family and friends grieve and mitigates possible flashpoints.</i>	
Do your guidelines outline how you will collaborate across departments to ensure consistency and adherence to the guidelines?	<i>Identifying how you will ensure adherence in advance increases compliance and mitigates potential inequities between student groups.</i>	

Tool 15: Community Remembrance Examples

There are two primary ways institutions choose to collectively grieve and honor deaths across their campus communities: annual remembrance events and memorial gardens.

- ▶ **Annual remembrance events** set the expectation that the institution will honor all deceased community members from the past year. Institutions can choose to include deceased students, faculty, former faculty, and alumni. They also help students establish norms about what healthy grieving can look like in practice.
- ▶ **Memorial gardens** offer students, faculty, and staff a dedicated space for reflection and can be used to commemorate all campus community members as well as other loved ones. Institutions can involve students in the design, planning, and construction of a garden or similar space.

How to Use This Tool: Refer to these examples as you design and implement your community healing spaces and events. Consider how you will involve students in the planning process and execution. Plan for annual and ongoing costs when determining what type of community remembrance space meets your campus' needs.

Annual Remembrance Event



Sam Houston
State University

Raven's Call

- Commemorates the lives of students, faculty, and alumni who died in the last calendar year
- All students, faculty, staff, and campus leadership invited to attend
- Includes pre-ceremony brunch and gifts for families of the deceased
- Hosted annually by the Orange Keys student group since 2012
- Features student-designed shadow box during annual ceremony

“Putting on this event is more than this group. It is about honoring those who we lost in our Bearkat family and honoring the families who lost someone so dear to them. I believe this event is by far one of the most important events to fully encompass what it means to be in the outreach of the Bearkat family.”

Orange Keys Member, Sam Houston State University

Memorial Garden



University of Idaho

Vandal Healing and Memorial Garden

- Provides a garden space for reflection, healing, and commemoration for all deceased community members
- Guiding framework and budget determined by interdisciplinary committee made up of students, faculty, and staff
- Landscape design and architecture students drafted concepts for the garden in their courses

“I think the healing garden and memorial will have the impact of students just being able to go somewhere to grieve. Students being able to be in an area that's not rushed, and it can all just calm down for a second.”

Junior, University of Idaho

Source: Sam Houston State University, “[Raven's Call: Gone But Not Forgotten](#),” University of Idaho, “[Vandal Healing Garden and Memorial](#),” University of Idaho, “[We Will Remember](#),” EAB interviews and analysis.



Sample Student Death Protocols and Excerpts

APPENDIX

Sample Student Death Protocols and Excerpts



Minnesota State Community and Technical College Student Death Protocol and Procedure

Purpose

The procedures outlined delineates the roles and responsibilities that should be assumed by individual administrators, staff, faculty, students and various campus departments following the death of a currently enrolled Minnesota State Community and Technical College student.

Procedure

The Office of the President

1. After official notification of a student's death has been given to the family by local law enforcement, designee of the Office of the President, in coordination with the Office of the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, will contact the family of the deceased student to:
 1. Offer condolences
 2. Determine if the family has any immediate needs from the College (e.g., gathering items from the residence hall room, notifying other students, etc.)
 3. Gather information about funeral, visitation and memorial arrangements
2. The Office of the President will notify Cabinet members with pertinent information regarding cause of death, time of death, memorial arrangements, student involvement on campus, etc.
3. Once appropriate, the President will work with Communications and Marketing and the System Office staff to coordinate emails to faculty, students and staff regarding visitation and funeral arrangements. Once notified, Cabinet members will assume the following roles:

The Office of the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs

1. The Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs office or designee verifies the enrollment status of the deceased student.
2. The Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs office or designee immediately notifies the following individuals:
 1. Director for Communications and Marketing
 2. Academic and Student Affairs Leadership Team
 3. Director of Housing and Residential Life (Fergus Falls Campus)
 4. Counselors
3. When appropriate, counseling or crisis intervention services are offered to classmates enrolled in the same courses as the deceased student and to any campus groups or students organizations who are affected by the loss.
4. The Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs will designate a staff member to serve as the campus contact to assist the deceased student's family. If possible, this should be the same staff member who initially contacted the family.
5. The Dean of Student Success will serve as the designee in the event of an international student's death.
6. The appropriate Academic Dean will serve as the designee in the event of a study abroad student's death.
7. The Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs or designee will provide the family members with information and guidance on the process to return textbooks, library books, etc.

Communications and Marketing

1. Communications and Marketing will work with the President and System Office to coordinate and disseminate all campus wide communication of the student's death.
2. If the student death is likely to generate media inquiries, Communications and Marketing, in collaboration with the President or designee will determine an appropriate spokesperson(s) to serve as media contact(s).
3. As necessary, Communications and Marketing will brief and prepare the designated spokesperson

Source: Minnesota State Community and Technical College, [Student Death Protocol and Procedure](#); EAB interviews and analysis.

Sample Student Death Protocols and Excerpts (Cont.)



Minnesota State Community and Technical College Student Death Protocol and Procedure

The Registrar's Office

1. The Registrar places a "deceased" indicator on the deceased student's academic record (this indicator will populate at the core data level and other Minnesota State institutions will see the indicator on the student's record).
2. The Registrar initiates procedures that close the student's academic records. As noted by AACRAO (American Associate of Collegiate Registrar and Admissions Officers) and FERPA the privacy interests of the individual are no longer in effect with the student's death. FERPA rights and the rights of privacy regarding the student's academic record end at death. As a matter of institutional policy, the following are the procedures regulating under what conditions the student's academic information should be disclosed to survivors or other third parties.
3. Minnesota State Community and Technical College continues to treat the academic records of the deceased student the same as a living student in that only directory information may be released to third parties. Minnesota State Community and Technical College requires documents that certify power of attorney or executor/executrix authorization to allow disclosure of information (other than directory) to survivors or other third parties. Either the parents or next of kin, with proper documentation, are considered the owner of the student's academic records.
4. Unless authorized by the executor/executrix, parent, or next of kin the College does not permit release of the deceased student's educational record information for a period of 10 years after death.
5. Pertinent information on the student's academic record is updated, such as: a deceased indicator, addresses will be updated to prevent inadvertent or additional mailings, and enrollment and matriculation, will be updated to reflect the reason for the closure of the academic records

Housing and Residential Life

1. If a deceased person is discovered in residence hall, staff should call 911 to notify local law enforcement of the student's death and immediately vacate the room and leave the site untouched.
2. The Director of Housing and Residential Life will notify the President of the student's death.
3. If necessary, the Director of Housing and Residential Life will take appropriate measures to assist in ensuring that other residents, students and passersby are not viewing the body or disturbing the site in any way, until law enforcement arrives on site.
4. The Director of Housing and Residential Life should assist the local law enforcement agency in identifying individuals who might have knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the death. In addition, the Director of Housing and Residential Life should attempt to identify those individuals who will be most affected by the death (family members, significant others, roommates, work supervisors, close friends, etc.). The Director of Housing and Residential Life and a Counselor will take appropriate action to console and support the victim's roommate and other impacted students.
5. The Director of Housing and Residential Life will create an incident report to be reviewed by the Director of Student Development Services.
6. Housing and Residential Life staff may not release information about the death of a student to any non-staff person. Media (radio, television, newspaper) representatives should be referred to the Communication and Marketing.
7. If a resident student death occurs off campus, staff should notify the Director of Student Development Services immediately, who will immediately notify the Director of Housing and Residential Life or designee, who will immediately notify and verify pertinent details surrounding the death to the local law enforcement agency, and the Dean of Student Success.
8. The Director of Housing and Residential Life or designee will consult with the Director of Student Development Services and the counselor to determine whether psychological assistance is necessary for the residents in the environment where the student resided. This assistance could be extended to residents in other residential facilities as well.
9. The Director of Housing and Residential Life or designee will work with the Director of Student Development Services regarding the packing the deceased resident's possessions at a time determined appropriate. Family members, roommate(s), and/or staff may pack the deceased resident's possessions. If it is determined that the roommate and/or staff will pack the deceased student's possessions, they must develop an itemized list of the student's belongings. The Director of Housing and Residential Life or designee, will be responsible to arrange pick up or delivery of the items with the student's family.

Sample Student Death Protocols and Excerpts (Cont.)



The Office of Financial Aid

1. The Director will coordinate the suspension of future disbursement of financial aid.
2. The Director will coordinate the return of financial aid funds to their appropriate sources after Business Services calculates the refund.
3. The Director will coordinate the suspension of future financial aid communication and this includes current and future year.
4. If necessary, end dates of the financial aid holds to the withdrawal date (date of death).
5. If the student incurred student loan debt, the Director or designee will inform the family member and/or next of kin of the type an amount of loan(s); name and contact information of the loan holder; and procedure to discharge the loan debt due to the death of the borrower.

Business Services

1. Business services will deactivate the deceased student's key card access (Fergus Falls Residential Life).
2. Business services will notify the Business Office to remove any charges such as parking tickets, keys, etc.
3. Business services will calculate financial aid refunds in adherence with federal and state financial aid returns of funds and regulations.
4. If the student's withdrawal state (date of death) is prior to the end of the drop/add period, a full refund of tuition and fees is processed; room and board charges are prorated for the days the students resided in the residence hall.
5. If the withdrawal date (date of death) is after the end of the add/drop period but prior to the 60th percent of the term and the student is a financial aid recipient, a Title IV prorated refund is calculated.
6. Refunds may be processed for a withdrawal (date of death) after the 60th percent of the term if approved by senior administration and financial aid funds are repaid to the source.
7. The College on a case-by-case basis may waive tuition and fee charges for the term.
8. If the student was a financial aid recipient, funds will be repaid to the sources (federal, state, or private lender).
9. Housing, meal plan and flex dollars charges are refunded on a prorated basis.

International Student Death

1. The Dean of Student Success or designee will contact a representative at the appropriate embassy to notify next of kin of the student's death.
2. The Principle Designated School Official (PDSO) or designee will serve as the campus contact to assist family members throughout the repatriation process.
3. The PDSO will follow all aforementioned procedures outlined in the event of an international student's death.

Sample Student Death Protocols and Excerpts (Cont.)

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY New York Institute of Technology Emergency Procedure: Death

Death can be the result of natural or accidental cause; it can be the result of a suicide or a homicide. This document does not address the crisis management that is needed to prevent a death; it assumes that the death has occurred. Every case will be different. Professional judgment is needed in each and every case.

Primary Response Team

- New York Tech campuses: Office of Campus Security
 - Long Island residences: University police
 - New York City residences: 911
- Local law enforcement and emergency responders
- Office of the Dean of Students staff/coordinator of campus operations and student services staff

Secondary Response Team

- Office of Strategic Communications and External Affairs
- Office of Counseling and Wellness Services staff
- Office of Enrollment Services
- Office of Housing and Residential Life
- Office of Human Resources
- Office of the President
- Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs

Objectives

To initiate and coordinate an official internal notification and response process in the event of a New York Tech community member death. The purpose is to respond to death within the community in a caring and timely fashion that avoids unnecessary burden for those handling the personal affairs by promptly informing appropriate school administrators to act accordingly where there is operational responsibility for the person's academic, financial, residential, or contractual relationships with the institution

Notification

- On-Campus Death: Call 911. Follow the established chain of primary responders. The Office of Campus Security will be the first New York Tech responders in all emergency events and should be notified immediately. Contact New York Tech officials in the immediate vicinity to help secure the situation until local law enforcement or campus security arrive.
- Off-Campus Death: There is no way to predict who will learn first of off-campus deaths. Community members who learn of the death of a student or staff or faculty member should notify the appropriate New York Tech official: the Office of the Dean of Students for student deaths, the Office of Human Resources for staff or faculty deaths.

Procedures for an On-Campus Death

For community members:

1. Call 911
2. Call the Office of Campus Security/local law enforcement
 1. Long Island: 516.686.7789
 2. New York City: 646.273.7789
 3. Central Islip: 631.348.7789
 4. Long Island residences: 516.876.3333
 5. New York City residences: 911
3. Do not allow anyone to enter the area or touch the victim or any property. Do not conduct searches.

Source: New York Institute of Technology, [Emergency Procedure: Death](#). EAB interviews and analysis.

Sample Student Death Protocols and Excerpts (Cont.)

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY New York Institute of Technology Emergency Procedure: Death

4. Write down the names of any individuals who were present at the time of death or when the body was found.
5. Remain on campus and available to answer law enforcement questions.
6. Reach out to the Counseling and Wellness Center or the Office of Human Resources for support if necessary.

For primary responders [...]

For Dean of Students:

1. Verify the student's identity, address, and college affiliation.
2. Coordinate all contact involving students and New York Tech community members.
3. Contact the assistant provost for student engagement and development, the director/associate director of housing and residential life, the director of counseling and wellness services, the appropriate academic dean, student's professors, and the Offices of the Registrar, Financial Aid, and Bursar.
4. Request Counseling and Wellness Center provide "crisis" and "grief" support services for community members.
5. Ensure the completion of necessary documentation.
6. Verify notification of next-of-kin.
7. Secure the personal property of the deceased, for later disposition to the estate.
8. Refer all inquiries from the media to the Office of Strategic Communications and External Affairs.
9. Refer all legal professionals to New York Tech general counsel.

For Office of Human Resources [...]

Procedures for an Off-Campus Death

For community members:

1. Notify the appropriate New York Tech official of the death:
 1. Student deaths: contact the Office of the Dean of Students
 2. Staff or faculty deaths: contact the Office of Human Resources

For Dean of Students:

1. Verify the student's identity, address, and college affiliation.
2. Coordinate all contact involving students and New York Tech community members.
3. Contact the assistant provost for student engagement and development, the director/associate director of housing and residential life, the director of counseling and wellness services, the appropriate academic dean, student's professors, and the Offices of the Registrar, Financial Aid, and Bursar.
4. Request Counseling and Wellness Center provide "crisis" and "grief" support services for community members.
5. Ensure the completion of necessary documentation.
6. Verify notification of next-of-kin.
7. Secure the personal property of the deceased, for later disposition to the estate.
8. Refer all inquiries from the media to the Office of Strategic Communications and External Affairs.
9. Refer all legal professionals to New York Tech general counsel.

For Assistant Provost for Student Engagement & Development:

1. After the family has received official notification of the death, serve as the official primary New York Tech contact for the family of the deceased student. (If a student dies from natural causes in the care of an attending physician and the cause of death is not suspicious, the attending physician is responsible for notifying the family. If it is a suspicious death, it becomes the coroner's responsibility to notify the family.)
2. Meet with family members should they decide to come to campus.

Sample Student Death Protocols and Excerpts (cont.)

NEW YORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY New York Institute of Technology Emergency Procedure: Death

For Office of Human Resources [...]

Follow-Up:

1. Contact with family to arrange for return of personal property.
2. Provide information to the college community as appropriate for dealing with a crisis on and off campus.
3. Contact the offices of the Registrar, Bursar, Financial Aid, Payroll, Housing and Residential Life, Alumni affairs, Library circulation, International Education, and any other office that could potentially send out information to a student or staff or faculty member.



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