



Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure

Subject: Student Death Notification Protocol

Number: UW SAP 11-9.2

I. PURPOSE

The death of a student represents a loss for the University of Wyoming community as well as for the family, friends, and loved ones of the deceased. This Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure (Policy) provides a process for internal and external communication, outreach, and protocols and supportive grief and loss services when the University experiences the death of a student.

II. DEFINITION

Postvention: Refers to activities following a suicide to help alleviate the suffering and emotional distress of the survivors and prevent additional trauma and contagion.

Student: Any person actively enrolled at the University.

Suicide: A death caused by self-directed, injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.¹

III. POLICY

When the death of a student occurs, the Vice President of Student Affairs and the Dean of Students (DOS) Office will serve as the designees for the Division of Student Affairs and notify the appropriate individuals, officials, and University units and provide them with information related to processes, procedures, and general support. DOS, or their designee, will serve as a liaison between the deceased student's family and University units and assist the family in navigating the appropriate processes and procedures. As early as appropriate, DOS, or their designee, shall inform the deceased student's next of kin or emergency contact that, if applicable, insurance policies—such as travel insurance, health insurance, or repatriation coverage—may provide benefits for the transport or repatriation of remains, travel for accompanying family member(s), and related services and shall advise the family that engaging with the insurance provider prior to making independent arrangements is essential to preserve eligibility for any available benefits. The Vice President for Student Affairs and DOS will facilitate communication to each impacted University community

¹ The University of Wyoming Police Department (UWPD) must confirm with the appropriate coronor's office that the death was a suicide before any school official may state this as the cause of a death.

member as soon as possible, generally, within forty-eight (48) hours of learning of the student death.

Any member of the University community who first learns of a student death should contact the University of Wyoming Police Department (UWPD) using 911 or 307-766-5179. UWPD will follow its protocols regarding confirmation of death and notification of next of kin.

IV. COMMUNICATION PLAN

A. University Leadership. Upon learning of a student death, UWPD, the Vice President of Student Affairs, and DOS will coordinate and immediately notify the Office of the President. No additional communication will take place until UWPD has confirmed the death, consulted with other appropriate law enforcement agencies, and ensured notification of next of kin. After law enforcement agencies and next of kin have been notified, DOS or the Vice President of Student Affairs will notify the Director of the University Counseling Center to help coordinate appropriate response to friends, roommates, and University community.

B. Family and Roommates. DOS, or their designee, will contact the student's emergency contact listed in Banner. Additional outreach will be provided to any student's roommate(s). The Vice President for Student Affairs and DOS will offer to meet with the family and roommate(s) in person.

If the deceased student lives in on-campus housing or a University fraternity or sorority house, and the family of the student wishes to collect their belongings, the Vice President for Student Affairs or DOS will coordinate with the family and meet with them at the student's living space on campus. If the Vice President for Student Affairs or DOS is unavailable to meet with the family, the Director of Residential Life will meet with the family.

DOS will provide face-to-face meetings for students who are more closely linked to the deceased to provide information and supportive resources. DOS will deploy case management services, including academic support referrals to counseling and limited excused absences.

C. University Community. The Associate Vice President of Marketing and Communications will notify the University community of the student death, but only after next of kin have been notified and next of kin and law enforcement approve of such a communication to campus.

D. Vice Presidents, Deans, Faculty, and Staff. When possible, DOS, or their designee, shall notify the Dean of the college or school for which the deceased student was enrolled, generally, within twenty-four (24) hours of learning of the student's death. DOS, or their designee, will work with the appropriate Dean and the Associate Vice President of Student Success and Graduation to notify faculty

and staff members who actively taught or were closely involved with the deceased student through research, academic support, or University programming, generally, within forty-eight (48) hours of learning of the student's death, when possible. This will include grief and loss support information and services and information related to the Employee Assistance Program for faculty and staff.

- E. Close Student Friends and Organizations Outreach.** As soon as possible, DOS, or their designee, will notify any known organization leadership, close friends, and associates of the student in person, or by phone if an in-person meeting is not practical, generally, within forty-eight (48) hours of learning of the student's death. During the meeting, DOS will provide information about authorized absences, mental health resources, and academic resources. This will include grief and loss support information and services. Follow-up with students will occur weekly after initial outreach for a minimum of four (4) weeks, or longer at the discretion of DOS.
- F. Special Populations Outreach.** DOS will notify the Executive Director of Student Life to determine group affiliation. When a student is known to be a member of a specific organization or affiliation, DOS, or their designee, will coordinate outreach with the represented organization to provide ongoing support. Examples of organizations or affiliations includes, but are not limited to, Fraternity and Sorority Life, student athletes, Army and Airforce ROTC, and student veterans.
- G. Additional Notifications.** DOS, or their designee, will make the following notifications to relevant offices so that they may take internal steps regarding information on a deceased student, within forty-eight (48) hours of learning of the student's death or as an obituary is available. These notifications may be shifted at the request and in the sole discretion of UWPD to accommodate family wishes and privacy, manner of death, or any pending investigation.

 - 1. Associate Vice President of Budget and Institutional Planning
 - 2. Athletic Director or designee
 - 3. Associate Vice President of Student Success and Graduation
 - 4. Chief Information Officer and Vice President for Information Technology
 - 5. Counseling and Health Services, including the Director of Student Health, Director of the University Counseling Center, Psychology Center, and WellSpring Clinic
 - 6. Director of Housing and Dining
 - 7. Director of Residence Life
 - 8. Global Engagement Office
 - 9. Human Resources
 - 10. Registrar
 - 11. Risk Management Office
 - 12. UW CARES Team

V. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Within forty-eight (48) hours, DOS, or their designee, will also help support any other students on campus who may be affected by the loss of a University student, including the following:

- A.** Working with the University Counseling Center (UCC) to contact impacted students and employees on campus regarding crisis counseling.
- B.** Coordinating with Residence Life to provide additional in-person support and touchpoints for affected students and Resident Assistants (RAs).
- C.** Referring employees to Human Resources to provide information on the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider and to determine care for any involved or impacted employees.
- D.** In consultation with the Vice President for Students Affairs, convening the Wellness in the West Coalition team to provide ongoing care and support.

VI. PROCESS REVIEW

DOS will work with the Vice President for Student Affairs to convene members of the UW CARES team to review efforts and responses deployed after a student death of any kind within two (2) weeks of the death, and then again after two (2) months to examine effectiveness of response efforts. Prevention efforts may also be reviewed to determine any gaps that were uncovered by the death.

VII. MEMORIALS

Requests to reserve space for memorial gatherings, events, or services on University property should be directed to UW Central Scheduling. Physical reminders (e.g., plaques, benches, and temporary structures) may be placed at the Associated Students of the University of Wyoming (ASUW) Memorial Plaza on the east side of Prexy's Pasture. The Vice President for Student Affairs, or designee, will meet with individuals who want to place physical reminders on Memorial Plaza to review process and support.

VIII. DEATH OF A STUDENT TRAVELING ON COLLEGE-SPONSORED PROGRAMS

In addition to the standard procedures for a student death, in the event of a student death (or presumed death if a student is missing) while participating in travel as part of a University-sponsored program, the following procedures shall be followed to ensure appropriate response and support.

For group travel, the accompanying University employee or program leader will immediately:

- A. Contact local emergency services and/or law enforcement and serve as a liaison between the local services and the University.
- B. Contact UWPD. UWPD will follow its protocols regarding confirmation of death and notification of next of kin or designate the appropriate party to do so based on the jurisdiction or country involved and will notify the Vice President for Student Affairs and DOS.
- C. If the group is outside the United States, notify the in-country or nearest United States Embassy or Consulate of what has happened and obtain advice and assistance.
- D. In consultation with DOS and others as appropriate, assess the need for program adjustments or early termination and any necessary resources to provide for the safety and well-being of remaining participants.

IX. DEATH BY SUICIDE

- A. **UW Postvention Committee.** Upon learning of a student death by suicide, the Vice President for Student Affairs and DOS will convene a UW Postvention Committee which will include, but is not limited to, representatives from UWPD, the University Counseling Center, and Residence Life, with support from the UW CARES Team. The Vice President for Student Affairs and DOS will coordinate with the UW Postvention Committee to implement Postvention policies and initiate a Postvention plan when appropriate, including effective communication. When DOS learns of a student death by suicide, the same notification and response protocols in Section IV of this Policy apply.
- B. Suicide Postvention involves a series of planned interventions through psychological support, crisis intervention, and other forms of assistance with those affected by a campus suicide with the intention to:
 - 1. Facilitate and promote healthy grieving or adjustment processes;
 - 2. Help students deal with current trauma and grief;
 - 3. Encourage the expression of difficult emotions;
 - 4. Promote existing counseling and support systems;
 - 5. Stabilize the environment and return campus to healthy functioning;
 - 6. Restore a semblance of order and routine;
 - 7. Help the community return to pre-crisis level of functioning;
 - 8. Prevent and limit the risk of negative behavior and further suicides through contagion;

9. Provide active outreach to students most likely to be emotionally triggered by the event; and
10. Limit the risk of suicide contagion by promoting sensitivity and awareness in campus-wide messaging, support programs, and social media.

X. CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORDS

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects student education records from disclosure to unauthorized persons. Per FERPA, the rights of eligible students (a student 18 or older or in college at any age) lapse or expire upon the death of the student. DOS will maintain records of internal death notification(s) along with other documents relevant to the incident.

Responsible Division/Unit: Student Affairs, Dean of Students

Source: <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/faq/does-ferpa-protect-education-records-students-are-deceased>

Links: <http://www.uwyo.edu/regs-policies>

Associated Regulations, Policies, and Forms: None

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