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Guidelines for Addressing the Death of a USFSP Community Member

University of South Florida St. Petersburg. Office of the Regional Vice Chancellor for Academic
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Guidelines for Addressing the Death of a USFSP Community Member

CAMPUS RESPONSE AND WORKING GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOL FOR NON-EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

A death of a student or employee is a tragedy not only for family members and friends but also for the University community. The University of South Florida St. Petersburg strives to ensure that our responses to the death of one of our community members are thoughtful, caring, professional, coordinated, and consistent. The notification of a tragic event sets in motion a range of protocols by Campus Police, administrators, medical and mental health professionals, Student Affairs personnel, faculty, students, and others, depending on the circumstances. These guidelines are intended for campus response to facilitate the support process, expedite accurate and appropriate communication, and provide assistance for the expression of care and sympathy. What follows are distinct guidelines for the death of a community member. Remember these are guidelines, and every situation is unique, requiring informed, individualized care and action. The Care Coordinator for a student death is Dr. Jacob Diaz, Dean of Students, and for an employee death is Denelta Adderly-Henry Interim Director, Human Resources. The Care Coordinator in partnership with with the Director of Communications will determine who the University Spokesperson will be for each situation.

Finally, remember that in a crisis, information is typically passed on only in a need-to-know basis. While we will undoubtedly be contacted by interested parties - it is not appropriate to speak about the situation unless you are the designated spokesperson.

PROTOCOL

NOTIFICATION: Chief David Hendry (x34475) (Cell: 727.409.5823)

Any member of the University community who receives information regarding the death of a current USFSP community member should notify Campus Police. The Chief of USFSP Police will notify the Office of the Chancellor and the senior leadership team and Communications for informational purposes and will convene a response meeting as necessary.

RESPONSE LEVEL

In most cases, the death of a campus community member can be handled effectively by the Dean of Students or Human Resources staff. In instances where the circumstances of the death may raise issues of public accountability or involve a level of media or public scrutiny a Critical Incident Response Meeting will be convened by the Chief of Campus Police.

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE MEETING

The Chief of Campus Police works with the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs in cases involving students and with the Director of Human Resources in employee cases to determine the need for a Critical Incident Response Meeting and who will be responsible for chairing the meeting. When necessary, the Chief will convene the meeting within the first business day after notification.

Recommended Participants

Chief of Police
Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs (if student)
Dean of Students and CARE Coordinator (if student)
Director of Human Resources (if employee)
Wellness Center, Director
Director of Communications
Dean/Director of Academic Department
Impacted Office (if employee)
Registrar or HR

Possible Participants

General Counsel
Housing/Residence Life, Director
Stud Life & Engagement, Dir.
Compass, Director
Campus Diversity Officer
Academic Advising, Director
Study Abroad, Director
Others as appropriate

RESPONSE AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL CHECKLISTS

The following checklists outline the basic steps campus support personnel generally take in addressing the tragedy. Units may have additional processes or internal protocols which they follow.

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE

- ✓ Identify who on campus is likely to be significantly impacted by the tragedy and determine the outreach and support needed.
- ✓ Designate appropriate USFSP point person to communicate with faculty and staff about administrative responsibilities and coordinate with appropriate offices regarding outreach to university community members.
- ✓ In coordination with Communications, determine media strategy and internal and external messages.

CHIEF OF POLICE

- ✓ Confirm death and verify necessary information about the circumstances.
- ✓ Evaluate the situation and establish the incident level.
- ✓ Evaluate threat to campus community and determine necessary safeguards.
- ✓ Contact local law enforcement and other emergency response agencies as necessary.
- ✓ Assign an individual to report to the hospital if appropriate.
- ✓ Determine the need for and possibly chair CIR meeting.

VICE CHANCELLOR OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

- ✓ Attend or identify a designee to attend the CIR meeting.
- ✓ Coordinate with dean, dean of students, and Communications regarding the dissemination of appropriate information regarding the death and funeral/memorial service.

- ✓ Work with academic unit, registrar, and others as appropriate.
- ✓ Notify appropriate offices of death.

**DEAN OF STUDENTS/CARE COORDINATOR
or DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

- ✓ After the official notification by the coroner's office or other outside sources (e.g., public information, such as news report or obituary). Determine who has been in contact with the family and initiate outreach with the family as the designated USFSP point person/coordinator of institutional actions. Facilitate family contact with appropriate university community members as requested.
- ✓ Verify information about the individual including campus relationships, organizations and activities.
- ✓ In partnership with the family determine what information the family wishes to disclose and, obtain consent to share information
- ✓ Makes arrangements with the WELLNESS CENTER for group and/or individual counseling if needed.
- ✓ Coordinate with the vice chancellors/dean/director and Communications and other offices regarding what information will be shared and about disseminating information regarding funeral/memorial service.
- ✓ Coordinate on campus memorial service arrangements as appropriate. Determine appropriate tributes.
- ✓ Identify University representatives to attend services.
- ✓ Stay in touch with the family periodically with guidance from General Counsel, if needed.
- ✓ Contact the business office (including Parking Services) to tie up any loose ends and prevent bills going to family, etc.

WELLNESS CENTER

- ✓ Coordinate with the Dean of Students and impacted departments and/or individual(s) for the provision of debriefing as necessary.
- ✓ Manages outreach to ensure the wellbeing of community members.
- ✓ Provide faculty and staff with suggestions for communicating with their students regarding the death and its impact on students and the campus community.
- ✓ Provide debriefing/education/consultation for University community members.
- ✓ Provide resources and referrals for off-campus resources for long-term support as necessary.
- ✓ Work with the Victim Advocate to provide services as appropriate.

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

- ✓ Responsible for all official communication and media relations. Will inform key stakeholders as relevant.
- ✓ Identify a media/press and release of information strategy (what and to whom and when) including an appropriate message to the *entire* campus community. All press communications should be coordinated with the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, and the academic dean prior to dissemination or with Human Resources in the case of faculty/staff. Note: Unless it is a faculty member or an

upper level administrator or board member, in which case the notice should come from the Chancellor or Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs.

- ✓ Provide appropriate “talking points” for staff and faculty who may receive inquiries.
- ✓ Work with vice chancellors and dean/director to draft a letter to the family expressing the University’s condolences. The Director of Communications will ensure that the letter is approved by the Chancellor.
- ✓ Update the University community and the general public of the incident status and response actions regularly.
- ✓ All communications must be mindful of and abide by FERPA and HIPAA policies.

DEAN/DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT

- ✓ The dean of the academic unit coordinates efforts within the college, school or division and serves as liaison or appoints a designee to work with support and response personnel.
- ✓ Attend or identify designee to attend the CIR meeting.
- ✓ Communicate steps in protocol to faculty and staff.
- ✓ Identify needs of students, staff and faculty impacted by the death.
- ✓ Work with Communications and vice chancellor to draft condolence letter to the family.
- ✓ Help shape next steps in partnership with the Dean of Students: memorial service, grief sessions, communication to unit, etc.
- ✓ Work with RVCAA, Dean and certifying office (Advising) to determine if the student meets the criteria for awarding a degree posthumously. The Dean must work with the certifying office at USFSP (advising) to provide the documentation to meet the criteria for the posthumous degree to be awarded. Once the RVCAA approves, the approval letter and documentation is sent to the USFSP Registrar to forward to the USF Registrar Office (URO) in Tampa to award the degree. Once the degree is awarded, the USFSP Registrar produces the diploma and notifies the RVCAA to prepare a letter to be mailed with the diploma. If the family desires to walk across the stage at an upcoming commencement ceremony, the Registrar’s Office must be notified to coordinate.

IMPACTED OFFICE (for employees)

- ✓ The director of the department/office coordinates efforts within the office or division and serves as liaison or appoints a designee to work with support and response personnel.
- ✓ Attend or identify designee to attend the CIRT meeting.
- ✓ Communicate steps in protocol to staff as appropriate.
- ✓ Identify needs of staff impacted by the death.
- ✓ Help shape next steps: memorial service, grief sessions, communication to unit, etc.
- ✓ Work with Communications and Human Resources to draft condolence letter to the family.

REGISTRAR

- ✓ Set the Deceased Indicator in Banner in case of student death. For currently enrolled students, only the Registrar may update the Deceased indicator.

- ✓ Work with RVCAA, Dean and certifying office (Advising) to determine if the student meets the criteria for awarding a degree posthumously. The Dean must work with the certifying office at USFSP (advising) to provide the documentation to meet the criteria for the posthumous degree to be awarded. Once the RVCAA approves, the approval letter and documentation is sent to the USFSP Registrar to forward to the USF Registrar Office (URO) in Tampa to award the degree. Once the degree is awarded, the USFSP Registrar produces the diploma and notifies the RVCAA to prepare a letter to be mailed with the diploma. If the family desires to walk across the stage at an upcoming commencement ceremony, the Registrar's Office must be notified to coordinate.

HUMAN RESOURCES (for employees)

- ✓ Work with appropriate offices (including system offices) if the death occurred on campus or was related to an employee's duties.
- ✓ Work with internal and external offices regarding death and retirement benefits. et the Deceased Indicator in Banner.

EDUCATION ABROAD

Work closely with the Dean of Students/CARE Coordinator and Communications on issues related to the family and campus communications.

- ✓ Recognize that cultural, religious and personal differences exist regarding how to cope with death and the deceased's remains.
- ✓ Offer condolences in a culturally appropriate manner, and advise the family of the appropriate documentation needed to process/close the deceased records. Inform the family that the university will take care of all administrative details related to the student (i.e. registrar, financial aid, university housing, student accounts, and faculty). This will avoid having the family needlessly contacted at a later date about details of withdrawal from classes, refund due, etc.
- ✓ If applicable, forward family request(s) for posthumous degree conferment for students to the appropriate Dean.
- ✓ Work with the Wellness Center to coordinate counseling services if needed.
- ✓ Use the link from NAFSA for details on crisis management:
https://www.nafsa.org/Professional_Resources/Browse_by_Interest/International_Students_and_Scholars/Network_Resources/International_Student_and_Scholar_Services/Comprehensive_Resource_on_Crisis_Management_for_the_International_Student_and_Scholar_Services_Office/

Resources: This working document was prepared by Patricia S. Helton, Regional Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs with credit to similar crisis management working documents from the University of Denver, Colorado State University, Coping with Death: http://rems.ed.gov/docs/CopingW_Death_StudentOrStaff.pdf, and NAFSA:

https://www.nafsa.org/Professional_Resources/Browse_by_Interest/International_Students_and_Scholars/Network_Resources/International_Student_and_Scholar_Services/Comprehensive_Resource_on_Crisis_Management_for_the_International_Student_and_Scholar_Services_Office/

Approved by Senior Leadership/Chancellor's Cabinet as a working non-policy document: November 29, 2017

Last updated: 10.18.2018 - Patti Helton, Regional Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs