

ANNEX 12: DEATH OF STUDENT, FACULTY, OR STAFF

GENERAL INFORMATION

The death of a student, faculty member, or staff member can be emotionally difficult for the entire campus community. Regardless, of where the death occurs (on-campus or off-campus), recognizing the profound sadness the campus community, friends, and family members will experience, requires our response to the situation to be crucial. This recommended protocol is designed to ensure a professional and caring response by the college.

Death is an inevitable and sometimes an unfortunate aspect of life. Death investigations are often necessary when the cause of death is initially unclear, or there is some suspicion of foul play. In this annex, you will find the five most common manners of death referred to in death investigations and how Helena College will respond to any of the unfortunate circumstances.

Families, friends, and co-workers of the deceased often seek closure and understanding of the circumstances surrounding the death of their loved ones. Determining the manner of death can provide answers and help families/community members come to terms with the loss.

There are five (5) manners of death:

1. **NATURAL DEATH** – A natural death is classified as a person who dies from natural causes, such as diseases or conditions related to aging. Common natural causes include heart disease, cancer, stroke, respiratory diseases, and various medical conditions. In natural death investigations, the primary focus is on confirming the cause of death and ruling out foul play.
2. **ACCIDENTAL DEATH** – An accidental death is a type of death that occurs as a result of unforeseen and unintentional events or incidents. Accidental deaths typically happen suddenly and unexpectedly, often due to circumstances beyond the control of the deceased person. These deaths are not the result of intentional actions, violence, or self-harm. Accidental deaths can have various causes, including car accidents, falls, drownings, fires, electrocutions, drug overdoses, poisoning, industrial accidents, and natural disasters. The range of potential causes is extensive.
3. **SUICIDAL DEATH** – A suicidal death, also known as suicide, occurs when a person intentionally takes their own life. Suicidal deaths can have complex underlying causes, including mental health disorders, emotional distress, substance abuse, financial or interpersonal problems, and feelings of hopelessness. Many factors can contribute to a person's decision to end their own life.

4. **HOMICIDAL DEATH** – A homicidal death, often referred to simply as homicide, occurs when a person dies as a result of another person's intentional actions. Homicide is a legal term used in death investigations to describe situations where one individual intentionally caused the death of another. Homicides can take various forms, including first-degree murder, second-degree murder, manslaughter, and justifiable homicide (self-defense). The classification depends on the intent, premeditation, and circumstances surrounding the death. Homicides are a serious matter and involve complex legal and investigative processes. They require the cooperation of law enforcement, forensic experts, and the criminal justice system to determine responsibility and provide justice for the victim and their family.
5. **UNDETERMINED DEATH** – An undetermined death, also known as an undetermined manner of death, is a classification used in death investigations when the exact cause and manner of a person's death cannot be conclusively determined based on the available information and evidence. It represents a state of uncertainty in which the investigative team is unable to definitively categorize the death as natural, accidental, suicidal, or homicidal. This may be due to the complexity of the case, limited available information, conflicting evidence, or other factors. Undetermined death classifications are relatively rare, as most deaths can be categorized into one of the established manners of death (natural, accidental, suicidal, or homicidal) once sufficient evidence is available. However, in complex or unclear cases, the undetermined classification allows for ongoing investigation and the potential reclassification of the death as more information becomes available.

All deaths that occur outside of a hospital or under hospice-care are investigated by the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff/Coroner's Office. The coroner's primary responsibilities are to determine and certify the cause, manner, and circumstances surrounding the death. In addition, the coroner is also responsible for identifying the body, notifying the "next of kin", signing the death certificate, and returning any personal belongings found on the body to the family of the deceased.

Regardless of the cause, manner, and circumstances surrounding the death of a student, faculty member, or staff member, we as an institution will respond in a caring, compassionate, and professional manner with full intentions to cooperate with law enforcement/coroner officials. However, our response plan will be broken into two separate categories;

- On-Campus Death (Student or Faculty/Staff Member)
- Off-Campus Death (Student or Faculty/Staff Member)

30 Minute, 3 Hour, 3 Day Response

Death of a Student, Faculty, or Staff Member

OFF-CAMPUS EVENT

In general, we will most likely hear about a student, faculty, or staff member's death by a decedent's family member, law enforcement, or by some other means or method. If you are notified of a death, it is important to make the following notifications as soon as practically possible.

30-MINUTE RESPONSE

- If you are notified of the death of a student, faculty, or staff member, it is important to contact a Helena College Executive level person as soon as possible and in the following order of priority;
 - ON-CALL SUPERVISOR by dialing (406) 447-6991.
 - If no answer, contact Kelley Turner; Executive Director of Operations; by dialing (617) 446-3691 or
Jason Grimmis; Director of Crisis and Emergency Management; by dialing (406) 461-0635 or
Stephanie Hunthausen; Executive Director of CTE; by dialing (208) 305-1042.
 - If no answer, contact Sandy Bauman, Dean/CEO; by dialing (406) 447-6928 or (406) 750-2460.
- Report accurate information as it was provided or relayed to you. Do not make any assumptions or fill in any gaps in the information that has not yet been confirmed or verified. Include the following information;
 - The name and phone number of the person who provided you with the death information.
 - Time and date of when you received the call.
 - Any circumstances shared with you by the caller.
 - City and State of where the death occurred.
 - Date and time of when the death occurred.
 - Name and contact information of the family liaison if known.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PERSONNEL

- Ensure the Dean/CEO; Sandy Bauman has been notified.
- Send a text message out to the "First Alert Group" with basic information;
 - Name of the student, staff, or faculty member that passed away.
 - Schedule a meeting with members from the First Alert Group.
- Initial Briefing of Information with "First Alert Group";
 - Disclose all known information.
 - Assign a member of the "First Alert Group" to Liaison with the decedent's family.
 - Assign a member of the "First Alert Group" to Liaison with law enforcement, if appropriate.
 - Find out Manner of Death and/or if investigation is ongoing.
 - Work with law enforcement/Coroner's Office to verify "next of kin" notification performed.
 - If manner is suspicious, consult with investigating agency before releasing information.
 - Prepare Director of Marketing, Communications, and Alumni Relations of communication needs or potential upcoming needs.
 - Determine what the immediate impact will be to the campus community.
 - Is it a student?
 - Is it a faculty or staff member?
 - Consider future activation of other Emergency Support Functions and/or resources (i.e., mental health, emotional support, counseling services etc.)

3-HOUR RESPONSE (STABILIZE)

- Determine what the immediate impact is for each category

STUDENT DEATH

- Contact Katelynn Eberhardt, Director of Student Wellbeing and Engagement.
 - Consider emotional impact for students, faculty, staff
 - Implement emotional support measures available shortly before or after announcement.
 - Consider academic impact.
 - Timing of when and how to communicate death announcement.
- Contact with Business Office Departments.
 - Financial Aid Office
 - Registrar's Office

- Business Office
- Consider communication strategy for the following groups;
 - **CONFIRM CORONER'S OFFICE HAS NOTIFIED NEXT OF KIN FIRST!**
 - Campus community as a whole.
 - Classmates, close friends, professors etc.
 - Decedent's Family Liaison.
 - Greater Helena Community, if applicable,
 - May depend on manner and cause of death).
 - Newspaper, TV Station, Social Media...
 - Timing of announcement(s).
- Secure any personal items/tools on campus belonging to the deceased student.
 - Items in locker(s).
 - Personal equipment for educational purposes/tools/etc.
 - Vehicle/bicycle/ etc.

FACULTY OR STAFF DEATH

- Executive Director of Operations will be assigned Operations Section Chief.
- Consider communication strategy for the following groups;
 - **CONFIRM CORONER'S OFFICE HAS NOTIFIED NEXT OF KIN FIRST!**
 - Campus community as a whole.
 - Coworkers, Cohort Professors, Direct Report, Known friends, on campus. etc.
 - Decedent's Family Liaison.
 - Greater Helena Community, if applicable,
 - May depend on manner and cause of death).
 - Newspaper, TV Station, Social Media...
- Involve Human Resources and Facilities.
 - Secure any personal items.
 - Tools, items in assigned office space/classrooms.
 - Items in locker(s).
 - Personal equipment for educational purposes/tools/etc.
 - Vehicle/bicycle/ etc.
- Determine the impact to the faculty/staff members department.
 - Timing of when information is released is critical.
 - Consider having emotional support measures available shortly before or after announcement.
- Consider activation of Emergency Support Functions and/or resources (i.e., mental health, emotional support, counseling services, etc.).

3-DAY RESPONSE (RECOVERY)

STUDENT DEATH

- Ongoing communication strategies (i.e., condolences, offerings, property collection).
- Ongoing cooperation with law enforcement/coroner's office.
- Ongoing emotional support considerations.
- Funeral Services.
 - Announce to the community the date, time, and location of the funeral service(s).
 - Consider sending flowers.
- Campus Remembrance.
 - Prepare for a vigil.
 - Celebration of life.
- Ongoing collaboration with family liaison.
- Ongoing collaboration with Business Related Departments.
 - Closeout Financial Aid requirements.
 - Registrar's Office- Record Keeping (Banner).
 - Business Office-related accounts (Student Account).

FACULTY OR STAFF DEATH

- Ongoing communication strategies (i.e., condolences, offerings, property collection).
- Ongoing cooperation with law enforcement/coroner's office.
- Ongoing emotional support considerations.
- Funeral Services.
 - Announce to the community the date, time, and location of the funeral service(s).
 - Consider sending flowers.
- Campus Remembrance.
 - Prepare for a vigil.
 - Celebration of life.
- Ongoing collaboration with family liaison.
- Ongoing collaboration with Human Resources/Business Office.
 - **IF** the decedent was also enrolled as a student, please follow Business Office Close Out procedures;
 - Registrar's Office- Banner.
 - Financial Aid Account.

- Business Office Account.
- Human Resources Liaison with Family.
 - Health Benefits.
 - Health Insurance.
 - Supplemental Insurance.
 - Life Insurance.
 - Etc.

30 Minute, 3 Hour, 3 Day Response

Death of a Student, Faculty, or Staff Member

ON-CAMPUS EVENT

Regardless of the death being a student, faculty, or staff member and the death occurs ON-CAMPUS, please follow these steps:

30-MINUTE RESPONSE

- Determine if the scene is safe
 - Is it safe for you to be in the room/area?
 - Is it safe for First Responders to enter?
- Request for First Responders regardless of manner of death.
- **(1st Priority) DIAL 911.**
 - Describe the location, name of decedent if known, time found, and your name.
 - If it is an obvious death - Do NOT touch anything/ Do NOT clean anything.
 - If you checked for signs of life, make sure to report that to the dispatch center.
 - If the body is found in a room, close the door and don't let anybody inside other than law enforcement or emergency medical services.
- **(2nd Priority)** Report situation to Helena College Executive Level personnel
 - **Contact Kelley Turner – Executive Director of Operations @ (617) 446-3691.**
 - **Contact Tommi Haikka – Asst. Director of Facilities @ (406) 594-3419**
 - **Contact Jason Grimmis – Director of Crisis and Emergency Management at (406) 461-0635.**
- Secure the scene/Keep others away
 - If outside/outdoors
 - Try to keep people away from the area.
 - Direct 1st responders to your location.

- Consider contacting Facilities to help shield the scene from view.
- If indoors
 - Try to contain the body from the view of others.
 - If it's an option, close the door.
 - Stand guard or contact someone else to stand guard at the door until 1st responders arrive.
 - Consider contacting Facilities to help shield the scene from view.
 - Again, do not touch anything unless;
 - You are checking for signs of life or,
 - You attempted life-saving efforts.
- If you find any person(s) in distraught
 - Remove them from the immediate area and have someone emotionally stable stay with them.
- Once law enforcement or emergency medical services arrive on scene;
 - Provide them with your name and contact information.
 - Provide them with any and all details you are aware of.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PERSONNEL

- Initiate "First Alert Notification" to executive level members.
- Contain the scene until first responders arrive.
- Cooperate with First Responders when they arrive.
- Ensure Dean/CEO is aware of situation/circumstances.

3-HOUR RESPONSE (STABILIZE)

Executive Director Personnel

- DEAN/CEO NOTIFICATION PROCESS
 - OCHE
 - UM-MISSOULA PRESIDENT
 - UPDATES AS NECESSARY
- Prepare for upcoming Communication Strategy
- Coordinate Emotion Support Services/Counseling Services
- Cooperative with first responders.
- Assign a liaison for first responders;
 - Law Enforcement.
 - Emergency Medical Services.
 - Coroner's Office.

- Determine the Academic Strategy for the next 48 hours.
 - Consider Cancel classes
 - Depending on the location of the body
 - Depending on the impact the death had on campus
- Once the body has been removed by the Coroner's Office;
 - Confirm law enforcement no longer has an interest in the scene.
 - Clean up the area, if necessary (blood, tables knocked over, etc.)
- Consider Communication Strategy in the event media shows up.
 - Assign a spokesperson
 - Staging area for media
 - Consider working hand-in-hand with law enforcement/coroner's office
 - Before releasing any information to the media;
 - Confirm Coroner has notified "Next of Kin"
 - Consider having law enforcement approve your messaging/release, so it does not hinder their investigation.
 - Having "No Comment" during the first 3-6 hours is reasonable.

3-DAY RESPONSE (RECOVERY)

Executive Director Personnel

- Dean/CEO provides updates as needed to;
 - OCHE
 - UM-MISSOULA PRESIDENT
- Prepare for the upcoming Communication Strategy
- Ongoing Emotion Support Services/Counseling Services
- Consider the coordination of a "Critical Incident Stress Debriefing" for those immediately affected
- On-going cooperation with law enforcement
- On-going Academic Strategy
- On-going messaging to community stakeholders

STUDENT DEATH

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- Ongoing emotional support considerations.
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FACULTY OR STAFF DEATH

- Ongoing communication strategies (i.e., condolences, offerings, property collection).
- Ongoing cooperation with law enforcement/coroner's office.
- Ongoing emotional support considerations.
- Funeral Services.
 - Announce to the community the date, time, and location of the funeral service(s).
 - Consider sending flowers.
- Campus Remembrance.
 - Prepare for a vigil.
 - Celebration of life.
- Ongoing collaboration with family liaison.
- Ongoing collaboration with Human Resources/Business Office
 - **IF** the decedent was also enrolled as a student, please follow Business Office Close Out procedures;
 - Registrar's Office- Banner
 - Financial Aid Account
 - Business Office Account
 - Human Resources Liaison with Family
 - Health Benefits
 - Health Insurance
 - Supplemental Insurance
 - Life Insurance
 - Etc.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

After the Coroner notifies the next of kin, a campus response must be formulated. This may include:

- Condolences from Dean to Family
- Announcement to campus (usually via a letter from Dean)

- Announcement to community (Director of Marketing, Communication, and Alumni Relations)
- Notification of appropriate faculty/staff (Executive Directors)
- Special attention to co-workers and friends (1:1 or group counseling/grief sessions)
- Media

ATTEMPTED SUICIDES

(Follow Annex 9: MEDICAL/PHYSICAL INJURY PROCEDURES)