

Example Policy Statement Addressing the Death of an Employee

Created by the Wyoming Department of Health

**CONSTRUCTION
SUICIDE
PREVENTION
PARTNERSHIP**

A Note About this Policy

This sample policy was created by the Wyoming Department of Health and included in "An Employer's Guide to Policy Approaches to Address Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco, Mental Health, Suicide, and Chronic Disease." [Find the full guide here.](#)

Changes have been made to some of the links in this document due to the original link no longer being valid.

The materials presented in this toolkit are provided to support employers but are not intended to replace legal counsel. Employers are encouraged to seek legal counsel to ensure that any policies implemented are in compliance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations including, but not limited to, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA); the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA); the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA); Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA); and workers' compensation laws. Additionally, employers should consider the impact of collective bargaining agreements before implementing policies, such as those described in this toolkit.

Rationale

The death of an employee impacts surviving employees in a number of ways. Emotional and mental health impacts may arise as a result of an employee's death. Furthermore, an employee's death by suicide can further complicate the grief process experienced by surviving employees.

Purpose

[EMPLOYER] is committed to supporting and promoting the health and well-being of all employees and other individuals visiting our workplace. We recognize the impact that the death of an employee may have on the [EMPLOYER] and those we serve. It is the intention of [EMPLOYER] to effectively and appropriately communicate with employees in this type of situation while respecting the rights, wishes, and confidentiality of the bereaved.

Understanding the many difficulties brought by the death of a loved one or colleague, the [EMPLOYER] may direct the employee's family to available resources intended to provide support when/if the family expresses interest. The [EMPLOYER] may direct an employee to available resources and support when/if the employee expresses interest.

Furthermore, [EMPLOYER] recognizes that an employee death by suicide can bring especially difficult emotions and complex responses.

We have established this policy to support and address the needs of surviving employees in the event of the death of an employee.

Definitions

As used in this policy:

A. "Immediate family member" means spouse, child, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, grandchild, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, a relative who raised the employee, or any person who has lived with the employee's family for a period of time.

Scope

Our death of an employee policy applies to all employees of [EMPLOYER].

Restrictions/Requirements

[EMPLOYER] commits to supporting surviving employees and surviving family members in the event of the death of an employee. The health and wellbeing of our employees is of utmost importance. The implementation section below outlines how we will address the death of an employee.

Exemptions/Exceptions

There are no exemptions or exceptions included in our death of an employee policy.

Communication

Communicating our death of an employee policy to both supervisors and employees is critical to our success. To ensure all employees are aware of their role in supporting this policy:

- All employees will receive a written copy of the policy.
- The policy will be reviewed in orientation sessions with new employees.
- The policy and assistance programs will be reviewed at safety meetings.
- All employees will receive an update of the policy annually.
- Posters and brochures will be available at all locations.
- Employee education about grief and the availability of resources will be provided to all employees.

Implementation

Effective [insert date], this policy is in full force and effect. Questions arising regarding the policy for any particular [EMPLOYER] employee shall be directed to the employee's acting supervisor. The procedures outlined below will be followed in the event of the death of an employee.

Death of an Employee

- Notify the human resource director or designee upon learning of an employee's death.
- The human resource director will notify leadership members of the employee's death.
- The human resource director will contact the employee's family and then determine next steps to address the situation. NOTE: Next steps will be determined on a case-by-case basis and informed by the rights and wishes of the family.
- The human resource director will contact the deceased employee's immediate manager(s).
- The chief executive officer will announce the death of an employee to the [EMPLOYER] staff. Only information that is publicly known and/or has been authorized by the family will be shared. This message will be communicated using the most expedient method available at the time.
- The human resource director will work with appropriate leadership to develop a formal, written statement to be used by [EMPLOYER] employees in response to questions that may arise from community members.

Death of an Employee (continued)

- The human resource director will provide a list of resources and/or benefits available for employee support (e.g., critical incident support, employee assistance program (EAP) services, and/or community-based resources). Employees will also be given information on how to access these resources and/or benefits.
- The human resource director will provide, to the extent possible, support and assistance requested by the direct manager.
- The leadership team may develop a plan to address holidays, anniversaries, and/or other milestone dates related to the employee's death that may affect employees and/or the organization as a whole.

Death of an Employee by Suicide

- Notify the human resource director or designee upon learning of an employee's death by suicide.
- The human resource director will notify leadership members of the employee's death.
- The human resource director will contact the employee's family and then determine next steps to address the situation. NOTE: Next steps will be determined on a case-by-case basis and informed by the rights and wishes of the family.
- The human resource director will contact deceased employee's immediate manager(s). The human resource director will review the "Manager's Guide to Postvention," which can be found here: <https://theactionalliance.org/sites/default/files/managers-guidebook-to-suicide-postvention-web.pdf>. After discussion with the human resource director, the manager may provide support and assistance to assigned employee(s) if requested and/or as manager 33 believes is appropriate.
- The chief executive officer will announce the death of an employee to the [EMPLOYER] staff. Only information that is publicly known and/or has been authorized by the family will be shared. This message will be communicated using the most expedient method available at the time and will be informed by safe messaging guidelines, which can be found here: <https://suicidepreventionmessaging.org/>.
- The human resource director will work with appropriate leadership to develop a formal, written statement to be used by [EMPLOYER] employees in response to questions that may arise from community members, informed by safe messaging guidelines, which can be found here: <https://suicidepreventionmessaging.org/>.

Death of an Employee by Suicide (continued)

- The human resource director will provide a list of resources and/or benefits available for employee support (e.g., critical incident support, employee assistance program (EAP) services, and/or community-based resources). Employees will also be given information on how to access these resources and/or benefits.
- The human resource director may provide support and assistance requested to direct manager if requested and/or as they believe is appropriate.
- The leadership team may develop a plan to address holidays, anniversaries, and/or other milestone dates related to the employee's death that may affect employees and/or the organization as a whole.

Evaluation

[EMPLOYER] reserves the right to evaluate and modify this policy as needed to best support the health and well-being of surviving employees following the death of an employee.