



DIVISION OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT LAMAR UNIVERSITY™

Division: Student Engagement

Department: Dean of Students

Policy Category: Administrative

Title of Policy: Guidelines for Responding to a Deceased Student

Effective Date: March 1, 2016

Revision Date: (Date any revisions made. All revisions made in red.
Each electronic copy will be saved due to this change)

Purpose

In the event of the death of a student, the following procedures will be followed as a general guideline. Realizing that death can occur under a number of different circumstances (accident, intentional, natural causes, etc.) there is great need for flexibility and good judgment. Considering the very sensitive and unpredictable nature of a death, no procedure can describe in absolute detail all the steps that have to be taken. Those responsible for implementation of these guidelines should be guided by the essential communication needs required in these situations, as well as empathy, sensitivity and support for the bereaved, common sense, and the need to preserve important evidence.

Procedure

A university staff or faculty member first informed of the death of a student should notify University Police. University Police will notify the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students or designee should notify the following individuals by telephone, text, and/or by email if necessary.

Primary- Mandatory (as soon as possible)

- Vice President for Student Engagement or designee
-VP for Student Engagement will notify the President and Provost
- Director of Public Relations
- Director of Risk Management
- Director of Student Health Center (Counseling)
- LIT, Dean of Students (if they are LIT student)

Primary- as indicated:

- Director of Housing & Residence Life (if student lives on campus)
- Director for International Student Services (if international student)

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- Director of Athletics (if student is an athlete)
- Director of Risk Management (if death occurred on university property or at university-related function)
- Registrar

Secondary (as soon as practical)

- Student's Academic Dean
- Department Chair
- Faculty that student is currently enrolled in for classes
- Director of Financial Aid
- Director of Scholarships
- Director of Human Resources (Student Employment)
- Associate Vice President for Finance and Controller
- Appropriate Campus Ministry (if student was actively engaged)
- Director of Setzer Student Center/Student Organizations (who will notify Student Organization faculty advisor and Student President and will check to determine if student is affiliated)
- Director of New Student and Leadership Programs (who will notify Student Government Association President and will check to determine if student is affiliated with a Greek organization)

DAY ONE

University response to the death of a student is led by University Police working closely with Dean of Students.

1. University and city police protocols are followed for investigation of death and processing of scene.
2. Public Relations contacts and/or responds to media initially and throughout the process, involving other University staff as needed.
3. An "information hub"/command location is established by University Police and Dean of Students.
4. Dean of Students or designee or Division office contact goes to the site (if on campus or to the site off campus {if appropriate}) to provide practical assistance and a symbolic presence.
5. The Dean of Students or, when appropriate, Director of Housing & Residence Life calls selected residence hall and/or other student engagement staff (identified on case-by-case basis) to site to respond to bystander questions, disseminate information, and identify community members in need of help to the degree possible.
6. Director of Student Health Center (Counseling) and counselor(s) arrive on site to provide psychological support for any student(s) desiring their assistance. (Director of Student Health Center (Counseling) determines which counselors will respond on campus).



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7. Staff working the site should be aware that upset students and others might be found well away from the site. (If appropriate to the circumstances, bystanders should be reassured by staff that there is no danger to them or others.)
8. If the death occurred in a residence hall and after police assess the scene as safe, then residence life/student engagement staff will notify the occupants on the affected floor directly about the situation, reassure them of their safety (if true) and instruct them to remain in their room until such a time the corridor is clear. The purpose of notifying residents is to demystify the activity on the floor.
9. Student who died should not be identified by name until police positively establish identity. Coroner determines cause of death. (This may take several days to confirm).
10. Unless cause of death is obvious and already publicly known, no one associated with the University should speculate on the cause of death until the Coroner makes an official determination of cause of death. (This may take several days to confirm).

Deceased Student/Family

11. When deceased student's identity is established, University Police and Dean of Students or designee will consult to notify parents or next of kin. In general, the notification will probably occur by University Police or another police agency or hospital. The President or Vice President for Student Engagement or their designee should follow-up after the notification to offer condolences on behalf of the University. University Police and Dean of Students staff will respond to parent/family questions and needs throughout the process.

Parents/family should have one main contact person with University Police and one main contact person in Dean of Students Office. Important considerations in working with parents/family are:

- a. Parent/family requests for detailed information concerning the death.
 - b. Parent/family desire to visit the campus or not.
 - c. Parent/family desire for information about student academic status or circumstances in the period prior to the death.
 - d. Parent/family desire for privacy.
 - e. Parent/family desire to include members of the University community in the wake/memorial/funeral/burial process.
 - f. Parent/family practical concerns about student possessions, personal vehicle, keys, any refund.
12. The Dean of Students Office, Housing & Residence Life, Setzer Student Center and/or New Student & Leadership Programs and Student Health Center (Counseling) staff identify closest student friends and begin interventions with them as quickly as possible (individual and small group as needed).
 13. When student's body is removed from the building, the least public, practical route is used. Residence life/student engagement staff is available along the route to answer bystander questions to the degree possible.

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If Student Lived on Campus

14. At the discretion of Director of Housing & Residence Life, roommates/suitemates of the deceased student may be moved to other on-campus housing on a temporary or permanent basis, if needed.
15. NOTE: If a death occurred in a room related to a criminal investigation, the law enforcement agencies investigating the death will secure the room for collection of evidence. Prior to law enforcement arrival, NOTHING should be moved or tampered with inside or around the room. When the investigating law enforcement agencies determine the room in which the death occurred has no further evidentiary value, the investigating agencies will grant access to Risk Management and family representatives to view and itemize the contents not taken for evidentiary purposes. Upon completion, the room shall be secured and returned to the order of the Director of Housing and Residence Life, unless University Police or Risk Management make a different decision in consultation with the Vice President for Student Engagement or their designee.
16. After University Police or Law Enforcement Agency gives permission family members may be escorted into the residence hall and room area by residence life staff, and by university police or law enforcement agency, as appropriate. Director of Housing & Residence Life will coordinate with Director of Student Health Center (Counseling) so that a member of the staff is readily available should the staff escort or family request their assistance.
17. Subject to the requirements of paragraph 15 above, the Dean of Students, Director of Housing and Residence Life or designee, along with Risk Management, will arrange for room contents to be packed, itemized, and moved as indicated by the family. The Dean of Students, Director of Housing and Residence Life or designee will ask a family representative whether staff may use some discretion in packing or disposing of empty containers, trash, popular magazines, etc. rather than packing and shipping such disposable items. The Dean of Students or designee will be present during family members escort into the residence hall and room.
18. Family inquiries about a transcript, posthumous degree, or other academic closure should be referred to the Registrar and/or Provost with assistance through the Dean of Students.
19. Family member inquiries about the liability of the University and/or payment of medical bills, funeral arrangements, or etc., are referred to the Office of Risk Management.

International Student

20. In the circumstances that the deceased student is an international student, the Dean of Students will work closely with the Director of International Student Services (ISS) to ensure a culturally appropriate means for notification and providing assistance to the deceased's family/next of kin and the international student campus community. Where appropriate, arrange for a person who speaks the language of the deceased student or translator to be available to assist with communication to the student's family/next of kin. Contact the appropriate embassy involved (if necessary).



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The Director of ISS will work with the Director of Student Health Service or designee to notify the health insurance company for the medical evacuation and repatriation process. The Director of ISS will advise the family/next of kin of the appropriate documentation needed to process the evacuation and repatriation insurance. The Director of ISS will also work with University Contract Administrator to conduct an inventory of the deceased student's personal property and belongings at their place of residence (on-campus or off-campus) and assist the family/next of kin with making arrangements for the property/belongings, including academic work, to be returned to the family's home. The Director of ISS will complete a SEVIS update, if necessary.

Notification of Death to Campus

21. The President or designee makes written notification of the death via campus email if appropriate. The Dean of Students will work with Public Relations in preparing text. Text includes, as deemed appropriate:
 - a. Student name, class level, major.
 - b. Date of death.
 - c. Location of death.
 - d. Statement that there is or is not a security risk to others.
 - e. Date, time and location of a discussion/grieving meeting (to be scheduled same day or evening when possible), to be facilitated by counseling and student engagement staff. (If campus wide announcement is not made, staff can facilitate appropriate intra-campus communication).
 - f. Student Health Center (Counseling) contact information for those in need of immediate assistance and/or desire to speak to a counselor later.

The residence hall directly affected by the death will be offered a discussion/grieving session as soon as possible, coordinated by the Director of Student Health Center and Director of Housing & Residence Life. Residence Life staff will help facilitate student ideas about expressing respect and sympathy in collaboration with the Director of Student Health Center, Director of Housing & Residence Life and University Police in a safe location identified by the aforementioned directors and University Police.

22. The Dean of Students/Director of Student Health Center (Counseling) speaks with faculty of student who died about having a presence in class, what can be said, grieving process, counseling resources, etc.

DAY ONE or TWO

23. The Dean of Students notifies Registrar of death so student records can be closed.
24. The Dean of Students notifies **Secondary Group (as listed above and as practical)** so student records/files are closed.

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25. The Student Health Center closes medical records as well as other appropriate administrative offices.
26. The Dean of Students Office notifies faculty for those students needing assistance with class absences.
27. The Dean of Students Office contacts Parking Services to determine if student has a vehicle on campus and determine its location.
28. The Student Health Center (Counseling) staff meets with first responder(s) as needed.

DAY TWO AND AFTER

Funeral Service and/or Memorial Service

29. The Vice President for Student Engagement or designee sends a sympathy card to family
30. The Dean of Students office will facilitate student attendance at the funeral if appropriate.
31. At least one member of the student engagement division office staff, dean of students staff and/or housing & residence life staff attends the funeral, if feasible, to demonstrate university support to the family.

On campus remembrance

32. The Dean of Students will meet with Directors of Setzer Student Center, Housing and Residence Life, Appropriate Campus Ministry, New Student and Leadership Programs, International Student Services (if applicable) and Director of Student Health Center (Counseling) to determine whether Student Government Association, Residence Hall Association, student organization, fraternity/sorority (where appropriate) or a core group of students desire to hold an on-campus memorial service or other expression of respect and sympathy.
33. If it is determined that there is not a core group of students interested in planning a Memorial Service, determine if they wish to do a remembrance within the department.

Dean of Students will notify Public Relations of the above plans as they are arranged.

Follow-up Session

34. A follow-up session of key responders and counseling staff should occur approximately three weeks following the death. The Dean of Students should ensure that this occurs.