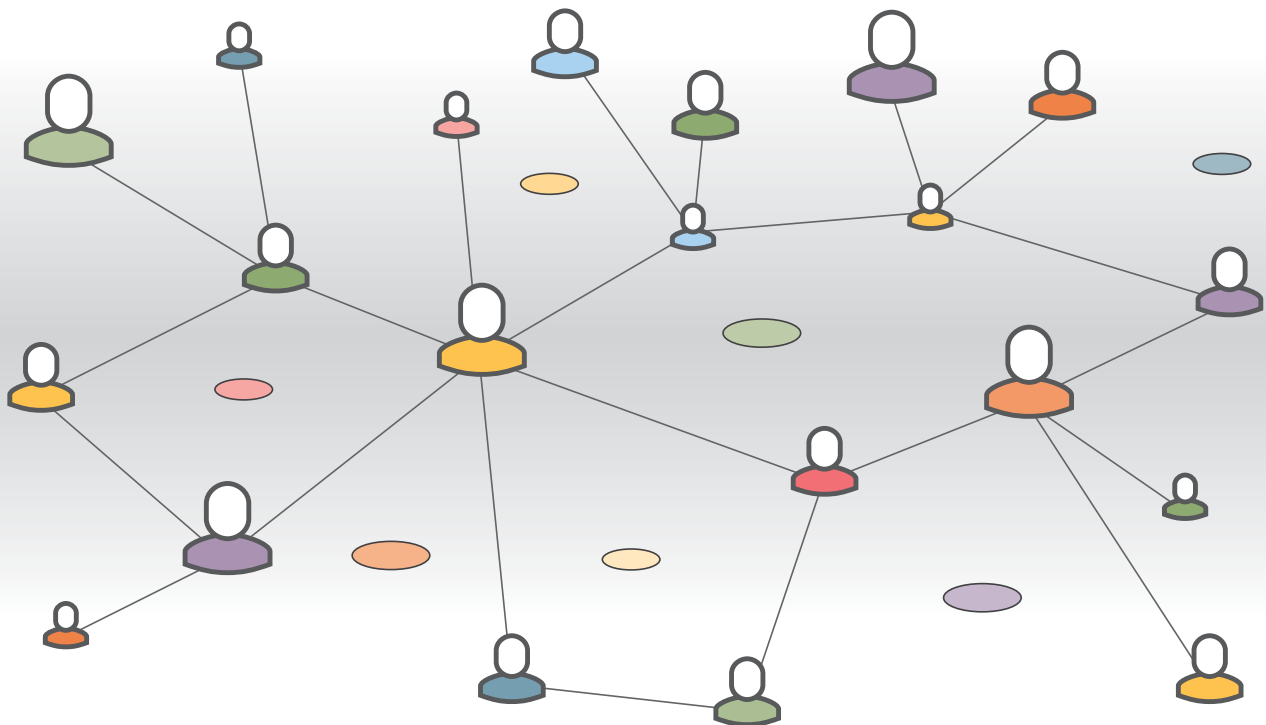


Workplace Considerations After a Suicide or Other Unexpected Death

PUBLIC STATEMENTS & MEDIA

Use this in depth guide to notifications and public statements when informing the media and the community about a suicide or other unexpected death in the workplace.



BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



Public announcements and official notifications should be made only by the point person/response leader or designated public contact for your organization. Always refer questions to that person, even if you know answers to the questions and/or know details about the suicide.

Contact the family of the deceased.

- If it is your job, contact the family of the deceased to express your condolences for their loss.
- Ask if there is information they would like you to pass on in your statements, like funeral arrangements.
- If a cause of death of suicide has been officially stated, the family may ask that the cause of death not be given as suicide in any statements.
 - Tell them you will try your best to respect their wishes.
 - Alert them that people may already know suicide was the cause of death.
- If the family asks for details to be shared widely and those details may be dangerous for others or increase risk for contagion, offer gentle guidance to the family about public statements.
- If it is not in your professional role to contact the family yourself, contact professionals or representatives who have spoken or will speak to the family before you make public statements.

Give a short statement as soon as possible, if your organization needs to respond to the death or will be asked about the death.

- Giving a response soon, even if it doesn't have all the information, can be more helpful than no statement.
- Let people know that you WILL give more information when you have it.
- Short statements of the facts will help stop rumors and guessing, while no statement at all leaves people wondering and can lead to more rumors.

Have one person make all official statements.

- Use direct but nonspecific terms about the death until cause is confirmed.
- People may ask surprising and inappropriate questions – have a short response ready and use it over and over.
 - “I don't have any more information at this time.”
 - “We need to wait until we have more confirmed information.”
 - “I strongly urge you for the safety of others to not speculate, repeat, or print things that we do not know at this time.”
 - “I've already said that I can't say anything more about that at this time.”
- Tell people you will give more information as soon as you have it.

Actively discourage rumors, gossip, and speculation.

- Rumors, gossip, and speculation can increase the **risk of contagion**.
- Ask others directly in your statement to be careful how they use social media.
 - Explain that it is **dangerous to spread uncertain information on social media** and tell them why.

Prepare a Fully-Confirmed Written Statement.

Issue a **written statement** as soon as you can, even if you are also making a verbal statement.

- Keep the reference to the death direct but nonspecific until a cause of death is officially announced.
 - “A death has occurred.”
 - “He/she has been found deceased.”
 - “He/she died on [date].”
- Be clear and specific in the written statement, using confirmed information.
 - Use the real word: “suicide.”
 - Learn the currently recommended words for talking about suicide, that are sensitive and help stop contagion.
- Say the person “died by suicide,” “took his/her own life,” or “killed him/herself.”
- **DO NOT** use the word “committed” suicide. *Committed* is a word that is mainly used with “sin,” “crime” and being “involuntarily committed.” Or the words “successful,” “unsuccessful,” “failure” or “failed attempt” when talking about suicide.
- Do not share details about the suicide.
- Please see the media recommendations for reporting on suicide for specific language guidelines:
<https://bit.ly/3A88ftt>

Make resources available.

- Gather up-to-date contact information for resources you can offer to people you are notifying.
- Hand out paper copies of the resource list.
- For help resources please visit: <https://bit.ly/3yolywG>
- To print help cards please visit: <https://vtspc.org/resource/vt-help-card/>

DO NOT give opinions.

- DO NOT offer an opinion on why someone killed themselves.
- DO NOT offer your opinions on suicide.
- DO NOT use judging statements such as “suicide is cowardly” or “suicide is selfish.”

Give a true picture of the person who has died and of suicide.

- Be respectful and still as safe as possible.
- Speak honestly about the person as someone who was deeply troubled, and could not see a way out of their pain.
- Talk about suicide as **something that can be prevented** and stress that **there is help** for people who feel there is no way out.
- Talk about the fact that suicide is almost always the result of mental illness and that there is help for depression and other conditions.
- **Your goal is to strike a middle ground** that is sympathetic and sensitive to the survivors, and also safe.
 - Keep in mind that your words should reduce the urge to identify with the person, reduce the desire to follow their example, and increase the knowledge that other options and help exist for those in crisis.
- Always leave people with a way to contact immediate help if they need it.

Contact and Resources Information

DESIGNATED AGENCY:



Available 24/7/365
802-488-7777
howardcenter.org



SUICIDE LOSS SURVIVAL

Below is a link to a collection of resources for those who have recently experienced a suicide loss.

Remember: You are not alone. There is a network of support available to you. It is important to prioritize taking care of yourself. Be kind to yourself. The path to healing is a journey. You can get through this.

Need to Connect? Call the Pathways Support Line (18+ Adult) **(833) VT-TALKS / (833) 888-2557**

Survivors of Suicide Resources:

www.vtspc.org/survivors-of-suicide-vermont-resource-packet

NEED HELP FOR MENTAL HEALTH?

Talk to someone you trust – a family member, friend, health care provider or faith leader.

Below is a list of numbers to call for immediate help.

In Crisis?

Text **VT** to **741741**

Call **2-1-1** or **9-8-8** to connect to your local mental health agency

Call **802-488-7777** to reach Howard Center

Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: **800-273-TALK (8255)**

Call the LGBTQ Crisis Hotline - The Trevor Project: **1-866-488-7386**

Call the Veterans Crisis Line: **1-800-273-8255 & press 1**

