

Protocol Response to the Death of a UCM member

The Principles of Community for the University of California, Merced, state:

“We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person while cultivating a campus climate rooted in mutual respect and compassion...”

As we strive to celebrate one another’s accomplishments, we strive to be especially supportive and compassionate during difficult times. One of the most difficult of times is when a member of our campus community dies. Death calls for the most sensitive of responses, yet campus members may be uncertain about what to do for family, friends and colleagues.

While each life and death is unique, and individual judgement is always necessary, these “Guidelines for Responding to Death” offer tools to help campus members to respond thoroughly and consistently to the needs of family and colleagues.

I. Reporting a Death

- Campus members may notify the campus of an employee’s or student death by contacting the employee’s department head/Dean (or designee), Academic Personnel, Human Resources, Student Affairs, Graduate Division or the Chancellor’s Office through the [Associate Chancellor](#). These offices are responsible for notifying each other as appropriate.
- In case of an on-campus death or during non-business hours call UCPD first as an emergency call by calling 9-1-1 on campus.
- If the cause of death may be work-related, contact [Environmental Health & Safety](#) immediately at 209-228-4234 for CAL-OSHA reporting and investigation.

II. Responding to a death

- Review the information in the following pages to familiarize yourself with the response steps. The information is divided into two categories, (The Chancellor’s Office and the Employee’s Department or Student Affairs), while also showing three time segments -- the first 24 hours, 24 – 48 hours, and the 48+ hours after the death has been reported – to help prioritize the response.

Chancellor's Immediate Office

- Confirms with employee's department/unit or Student Affairs the validity of the report and that a coordinator has been designated.
- Consults with campus entities as needed.
- Will act as a coordinator if death occurs on university property.

First 24 Hours

1. In consultation with employee's department/unit or Student Affairs, consult University Communications for any public announcement/e-mail notifications.
2. Contact Human Resources/Academic Personnel/Student Affairs for consultation in addressing the needs of staff, faculty, students and family affected.

24 to 48 Hours

3. Chancellor's Office sends a condolence card/call to the family.
4. Contact [Staff Assembly](#), Academic Personnel or Student Affairs to arrange for a campus moment of silence memorial.
5. Chancellor's Communications archives the death notification.

The Employee's Department/Unit/Student Affairs

- Appoints a coordinator. When an employee works in more than one department, the appropriate VC may be contacted to appoint the coordinator (see coordinator role attached).

The coordinator:

Determines the validity of the report and begins the death protocol.

Completes or delegates the following tasks: Print out the final checklist (attached) and uses it to keep track of assignments to others and activities completed.

Response to family and survivors in the campus community.

First 24 Hours

1. Facilitate communication between family survivors and campus services such as HR and Benefits.
2. Consult with HR Business Partner or Academic Personnel for release of information, sensitivity of notifying those close to the deceased.

24 to 48 Hours

3. Initiate communication to the family with the appropriate VC office. Identify campus representative in conjunction with the appropriate VC to attend on/off campus events.
4. Collect info about on & off campus events, determine arrangements & ensure notifications/invitations for attendance. Consider how donations are being handled.
5. Review info on Benefits and Payroll in order to discuss with the family of the deceased.

48+ Hours

6. Review the following for applicability:
 - Death certificate
 - Cause of death – Special Considerations
 - Multiple deaths
 - Posthumous awards
7. Inventory personal and professional possessions and arrange for retrieval. Use your own judgement as to the appropriate timing of this task.

Use the “Final Checklist” to make sure all activities are completed.