

Death of an Employee

Resource Guide for Supervisors

The death of an employee is a traumatic event that may greatly affect the office. Whether the death arose from a prolonged illness or a sudden event, colleagues may experience feelings of grief and loss. As a supervisor, it's important to be aware of this and prepared for how to support your staff. On a practical level, there are also numerous issues that must be addressed, including informing the staff, covering the employee's work, and working with HR to finalize compensation and benefit payments to the estate and beneficiaries.

Immediate Response and Communication

If death (or serious accident/illness) occurs at work:

- Call x1515 or 911 (if off campus), do not move the person.
- Collect the employee's emergency contact information for the police to notify the next of kin – if you don't know who the emergency contact is, contact HR at 816-235-1621 and they will forward information to the police.
- Contact the Worker's Compensation Coordinator to report at 573-882-8100.
- Notify those with the most critical need to know first, including the Chancellor's Office (Chancellor@umkc.edu) & Human Resources (UMKCHR@umkc.edu).
- Do not make any statements regarding the loss to the press or anyone other than employees from the following campus departments:
 - Strategic Marketing & Communications
 - Campus Police Department
 - Office of Risk & Insurance Management
 - Office of the General Counsel
 - Human Resources
 - Chancellor's Office

If death occurs outside of work:

- Notify those with the most critical need to know first, including the Chancellor's Office (Chancellor@umkc.edu) & Human Resources (UMKCHR@umkc.edu).
- Someone from the family will likely contact you. Here are some things to cover in that conversation:
 - Extend condolences.
 - Inquire about service arrangements or ask for the name of a contact person who can provide funeral details when known.
 - Ask if work colleagues may attend the service; the family might want only a small group of immediate relatives to participate.
 - Determine the family's wishes regarding remembrance (e.g. flowers, charitable contributions) and where sympathy cards should be sent.
 - Provide family with the phone number for Human Resources, 816-235-1621. Let them know that we would be happy to talk to or meet with them at their convenience to

discuss benefit matters. While some families may want to delay this discussion until after the funeral, most will find this information useful prior to making arrangements.

Notifying Employees

- Meet with employees as soon as possible. Please contact your HRF/HRBP for guidance.
 - Remember to contact staff who may be away or on leave.
 - You might want to add a few words about your favorite memory of the person or how that person had an impact on you.
 - Communicate the family's wishes regarding flowers or donations in lieu of flowers.
 - Designate an internal contact person for employees who have any questions or concerns, to prevent employees from trying to contact the family directly.
- Remind employees that UMKC's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) with Saint Luke's Health System in Kansas City, has counselors available to talk them through the stress and grief they might experience. The number is 816-931-3073 or 800-327-1223.
 - The EAP is also available to work groups that may have been directly affected by the employee's death.
 - Your HRF/HRBP can help contact the EAP to discuss the needs of the work group to determine the type of debriefing or intervention available.
- Try to be flexible and provide grieving employees time off as needed.

Keeping Business Moving

- Arrange to redirect phone, voicemail, email and mail communications.
- Figure out the open items, major issues, and immediate tasks that were associated with the person.
 - Once you have this information, you will need to meet with your staff and figure out how to distribute the person's work.
 - You will also need to discover as much information about any future appointments or commitments.
- Work with HRF/HRBP to begin termination processing following normal procedures (outlined below).
- As the manager, understand the death of an employee may result in lower productivity and motivation for a brief time. Meeting with your team soon after may ease the impact of loss. Eventually the work unit will return to its normal level of functioning.

Planning for Funeral/Memorial Service

- Determine if flowers should be sent and where they are to be sent according to family's wishes.
- Try to be flexible and allow employees time off to attend the service.

Termination Processing with Human Resources

You will work with your HRF/HRBP to ensure payment for deceased employees and proper closure of the employee file.

Employee's Department

Human Resources Facilitator/Business Partner

Department HRF/HRBP will be responsible for the following:

- Notifying the Vice Chancellor of Human Resources, Total Rewards Consultant, and Human Resources Operations of employee death.
- Submitting an ePAF/PAF and other necessary documents to terminate employee's employment.
- Contacting the Chancellor Office (Chancellor@umkc.edu) and Provost Office (Provost@umkc.edu) (if applicable) and provide the following information:
 - Name of deceased
 - Date of death
 - Title and Unit of the deceased
 - Funeral Arrangement information
- If Human Resources Office is contacted directly by the employee's family, information above will be recorded and shared with the employee's department HRF/HRBP for termination process to be completed.

Human Resources Office

Once the Human Resources Office has been notified, the office will be responsible for coordinating the termination paperwork and the following activities:

Total Rewards Consultant

Will be responsible for the following:

- Contacting the beneficiary and providing information regarding specific benefits.

Human Resources Operations

Once ePAF/PAF is executed, the following processes will be completed:

- Changing taxation to allow exemption from federal and state taxes (and city taxes as appropriate).
- Changing disposition of check to be held at the Payroll Office for proper authorization (Certified Copy or original Court Order) to release check.

HR Operations and/or Total Rewards Consultant will instruct the family to contact Probate Court of the County in which the deceased employee resided in order to obtain deceased employee's outstanding payroll check(s).