Workplace Considerations After a Suicide or Other Unexpected Death

As a Business Owner or Workplace Supervisor, you may be interacting with people affected by suicide or an unexpected death in one of the places they spend most of their time – the work site.

This brochure provides postvention information that will aid in the response to a suicide or unexpected death that has occurred in the workplace or community.

Contact and Resources Information

INTERNAL CRISIS CONTACT/ POINT PERSON:

Name: ___________________________________________________________
Email: ___________________________________________________________
Phone: ___________________________________________________________

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS:

Type: _____________________________________________________________
Name: ___________________________________________________________
Email: ___________________________________________________________
Phone: ___________________________________________________________

Type: _____________________________________________________________
Name: ___________________________________________________________
Email: ___________________________________________________________
Phone: ___________________________________________________________

Type: _____________________________________________________________
Name: ___________________________________________________________
Email: ___________________________________________________________
Phone: ___________________________________________________________

NOTES: ________________________________________________________________________________________
What is Postvention?

Postvention is the organized response after a suicide or other unexpected death has occurred that aims to facilitate healing from grief and distress, mitigate the negative effects of exposure to suicide and to prevent suicide among those who are at high risk. It is best practice for postvention to occur within the week following a death.

When following the postvention steps, check in with those you work with, e.g., Human Resource Departments and Employee Assistance Programs for protocols that may be in place to establish roles and responsibilities.

It may be helpful to identify a point person or response leader. This individual can be a business owner or any other individual comfortable with taking on the role. All incoming and outgoing information is channeled through the point person/response leader.

Please don’t feel alone in your response. Every business, even those with a Human Resources Department or Employee Assistance Program, can reach out to the local Designated Agency for postvention support.

Need Help for Mental Health?

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

In Crisis?

- Text VT to 741741 Crisis Text Line, free, 24/7, confidential
- 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: 1-866-488-7386
- Call the Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press 1

FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION visit https://vtspc.org/postvention-for-employers/ to learn more about postvention protocols and steps you can take following a suicide or unexpected death. The following resources are available:

- Workplace Considerations After a Suicide or Other Unexpected Death Handbook
- Postvention Quick Guide
- Public Statements and Media Guidelines

Postvention Steps Quick Guide

01 **IDENTIFY POINT PERSON/LEAD CONTACT**
All information and communications should be channeled through the point person/lead contact.

02 **GATHER INFORMATION**
Before moving forward with any steps gather and confirm as much information as possible about the situation.

03 **RESPECT THE PRIVACY OF THE INDIVIDUAL**
Recognize the individual’s needs for privacy in the workplace, unless authorized to do so, do not share information with other people. If asked for details, respond as you would with any other medical emergency – acknowledge concern without sharing details.

04 **MAKE FOLLOW-UP CONTACT**
Reach out as soon as possible, even if briefly, to family members and impacted staff.

05 **IMMEDIATE PROFESSIONAL FOLLOW-UP**
Have one person make all official statements and actively discourage rumors, gossip, and speculation.

06 **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF**
Recognize that you need support too, and ask for help if you are struggling.

07 **ASSESS NEED FOR IMMEDIATE SUPPORTS**
Give out printed resources, talk with those affected and reach out to those who may need extra attention. Call your designated mental health agency or 2-1-1 to identify resources and support.

08 **PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT & CARE**
Keep hard copies of resources in central locations and promote the availability of resources. Routinely check in with impacted staff.

09 **WORK TO REDUCE STIGMA**
Regularly find ways to promote open communication about mental health and lead by example by speaking up about the importance of mental health.

10 **PREPARE FULLY CONFIRMED WRITTEN STATEMENT**
You may want to issue a clear and specific written statement or have information on your website or social media; consult with the family about appropriate details to share, if applicable.

11 **MAKE NOTIFICATIONS**
Public announcements and notifications should only be made by the point person/lead contact or designated public contact for your organization.

12 **OFFER EDUCATION**
Offer suicide prevention training workshops after the community has had some time to recover.

These priority action steps are critically important parts of postvention.

This document was created by the Center for Health and Learning and Howard Center and may be replicated if acknowledgment is given.