



POLICY STATEMENT
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Corrections

Policy Subject: Notification of Extraordinary Unexpected Deaths		Policy Number: 1.1.5
Date of Issue: April 4, 2022	Authority: Signature on File George M. Little	Effective Date: April 11, 2022

I. AUTHORITY

The Authority of the Secretary of Corrections to direct the operation of the Department of Corrections is established by Sections 201, 206, 506, and 901-B of the Administrative Code of 1929, 71 P.S. §§61, 66, 186, and 310-1, Act of April 9, 1929, P.L. 177, No. 175, as amended.

II. APPLICABILITY

This policy is applicable to all facilities operated under the jurisdiction of, or conducting business with the Department of Corrections, Department employees, volunteers, contract personnel, visitors, and inmates.

III. POLICY

It is the policy of the Department to establish procedures for the notification process for extraordinary unexpected deaths.

IV. PROCEDURES

All applicable procedures are contained in the procedures manual that accompanies this policy document.

V. SUSPENSION DURING AN EMERGENCY

In an emergency or extended disruption of normal facility operation, the Secretary/designee may suspend any provision or section of this policy for a specific period.

VI. RIGHTS UNDER THIS POLICY

This policy does not create rights in any person nor should it be interpreted or applied in such a manner as to abridge the rights of any individual. This policy should be interpreted to have sufficient flexibility to be consistent with law and to permit the accomplishment of the purpose(s) of the policies of the Department of Corrections.

VII. RELEASE OF INFORMATION AND DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

A. Release of Information

1. Policy

This policy document is public information and may be released upon request.

2. Confidential Procedures (if applicable)

Confidential procedures for this document, if any, are not public information and may not be released in its entirety or in part, without the approval of the Secretary of Corrections/designee. Confidential procedures may be released to any Department of Corrections employee on an as needed basis.

B. Distribution of Policy

1. General Distribution

The Department of Corrections policy and procedures shall be distributed to the members of the Central Office Executive Staff, all Facility Managers, and Community Corrections Regional Directors on a routine basis. Distribution of confidential procedures to other individuals and/or agencies is subject to the approval of the Secretary of Corrections/designee.

2. Distribution to Staff

It is the responsibility of those individuals receiving policies and procedures, as indicated in the "General Distribution" section above, to ensure that each employee expected or required to perform the necessary procedures/duties is issued a copy of the policy and procedures either in hard copy or via email, whichever is most appropriate.

VIII. SUPERSEDED POLICY AND CROSS REFERENCE

A. Superseded Policy

1. Department Policy

This document establishes policy on this subject.

2. Facility Policy and Procedures

This document supersedes all facility policy and procedures on this subject.

B. Cross Reference(s)

1. Administrative Manuals/Department Policies

- a. DC-ADM 003, Release of Information
- b. 1.2.1, Victim Services
- c. 6.3.1, Facility Security
- d. 6.7.2, Special Response Teams
- e. 13.1.1, Management and Administration of Health Care

2. ACA Standards

- a. Adult Correctional Institutions: 5-ACI-1C-25, 5-ACI-3A-09, 5-ACI-6C-02, 5-ACI-6C-16
- b. Adult Community Residential Services: 4-ACRS-4C-21, 4-ACRS-7D-15



PROCEDURES MANUAL
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Corrections

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Release of Information:

Policy Document: This policy document is public information and may be released upon request.

Procedures Manual: The procedures manual for this policy may be released in its entirety or in part, with the prior approval of the Secretary/designee. Unless prior approval of the Secretary/designee has been obtained, this manual or parts thereof may be released to any Department employee on an as needed basis only.

1.1.5, Notification of Extraordinary Unexpected Deaths Procedures Manual
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Section 1 – Procedures

Section 1 – Procedures¹

A. General

When an inmate dies, both facility and Central Office administrations need to respond to the inmate's next of kin (NOK) in an appropriate and timely manner. This includes providing clear communication at both the facility and Central Office levels, completing a thorough internal investigation of the event, and communicating and providing Department of Corrections (DOC) designated information to the NOK.

B. Inmate Death

When a State Correctional Institution (SCI) inmate extraordinary unexpected death (i.e., suicide/homicide, or any accidental death as defined by the Regional Deputy Secretary [RDS]) occurs, the Corrections Health Care Administrator (CHCA)/Registered Nurse Supervisor (RNS)/designee shall complete a **DC-509, Report of Inmate Death**, and a **DC-121, Part 2, Extraordinary Occurrence Report (EOR)** in accordance with Department policy **6.3.1, "Facility Security."** The CHCA/RNS/designee is responsible for verifying the time and initial cause of death from a treating physician, hospital official, emergency medical services (EMS), or coroner.

C. Notification of Inmate Death

1. The Facility Manager/designee shall:
 - a. ensure the **Extraordinary Unexpected Death Task List (Attachment 1-A)** is initiated;
 - b. ensure the office of the Executive Deputy Secretary for Institutional Operations (EDSI), and the RDS, is notified by telephone (24 hours/seven days/week). After normal business hours it should be reported in accordance with Department policy **6.3.1, Section 17**;
 - c. in conjunction with the CHCA/RNS/designee, attempt to contact the inmate's NOK via telephone. When telephone contact is made with the NOK, the following shall be provided:²
 - (1) the circumstances surrounding the death; and
 - (2) the facility's concern and sympathy.
 - d. in the event the NOK designated by the inmate cannot be reached via telephone, local law enforcement officials in the NOK's home location shall be contacted for

¹ 5-ACI-6C-16

² 5-ACI-6C-02

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- assistance. If local law enforcement is unable to locate/assist, contact the Office of Chief Counsel for assistance;
- e. ensure the Corrections Superintendent's Assistant is notified in order to prepare the Press Release for the Central Office Press Secretary's approval;
 - f. contact the Shift Commander so an entry can be made in the facility's Daily Occurrence Report;³
 - g. based on the incident, coordinate with the facility's Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team Leader in order to provide crisis intervention services (small group, defusing, and/or debriefing) in accordance with Department policy **6.7.2, "Special Response Teams."** CISM shall be activated for all suicides;⁴
 - h. notify the facility records office so that the inmate's death can be entered into the Inmate Records System (IRS) by the end of the workday. If the death occurred after normal working hours, the death shall be entered the next working day. The Inmate Records Office shall also complete an entry in the **DC-15, Inmate Record** regarding the inmate death and communication by the Facility Manager/designee, and the CHCA/RNS/designee to the deceased inmate's NOK;
 - i. notify the Business Office and Clergy Office by the end of the next business day;
 - j. disposition of personal effects of the deceased shall be mailed to the NOK/designee within five business days of notification of inmate death and in accordance with Department policy **6.3.1**; and
 - k. ensure the completed **Extraordinary Unexpected Death Task List** is returned to the EDSI's Assistant within ten business days of NOK notification.
2. The CHCA/RNS/designee shall document a progress note in the electronic health record (EHR) detailing the discussions with the NOK and Facility Manager/designee.
 3. The facility Chaplain/designee shall follow-up with the NOK within five business days of NOK notification to offer emotional and spiritual support.⁵
 4. The facility inmate Counselor shall contact the Office of Victim Advocate (OVA) in accordance with Department policy **1.2.1, "Victim Services."**
 5. The Medical/Mental Health Advocate shall:
 - a. review the EHR and corresponding incident reports;

³ 5-ACI-3A-09

⁴ 5-ACI-1C-25

⁵ 4-ACRS-4C-21

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- b. provide a follow-up telephone call to the NOK within 48 hours. The Facility Manager and Office of Chief Counsel shall be consulted for guidance prior to making the follow-up call. The purpose of the call shall be to provide communication and clarification regarding the incident. The NOK may ask questions and the Medical/Mental Health Advocate or designee shall seek responses as they are available; and
 - c. mail the **Unexpected Loss Brochure (Attachment 1-B)** to the inmate’s NOK.
6. The Department's Press Secretary must approve release of any information regarding an inmate death, to include affirmation that NOK has been contacted by the facility, to the news media, in accordance with Department policy **DC-ADM 003, “Release of Information.”**
7. The EDSI’s Assistant shall:
- a. receive and review the facility’s submission of information regarding the inmate death;
 - b. upon Department approval, forward an information packet to the NOK within 21 days of inmate death. This packet shall include details about the death and steps needed to request medical/mental health information; and
 - c. coordinate a meeting with the Executive Staff and Facility Management upon NOK’s request.

D. Investigation of an Inmate Death, Funeral Arrangements, Death Certificates, and Clinical Reviews

1. Investigation of an inmate death, funeral arrangements, death certificates and clinical reviews shall be in accordance with Department policy **13.1.1, “Management and Administration of Health Care,” Section 9.**
2. The Bureau of Investigations and Intelligence (BII) shall complete a review of all completed suicide deaths.

E. Bureau of Community Corrections (BCC) Notification of Extraordinary Unexpected Deaths⁶

1. Each BCC reentrant shall designate an individual, NOK to be notified in the event of a serious/critical illness, injury, or death.
2. The information shall be recorded by the Community Corrections Center (CCC) Monitor on the **DC-940, BCC-CCC Intake Checklist** and maintained in the reentrant’s case file.
3. In the event of the death of a reentrant, the CCC Director/designee or Contract Facility Coordinator (CFC) shall be responsible for coordinating the notification of the NOK

⁶ 4-ACRS-7D-15

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documented on the **DC-940**. Primarily, the community, hospital, or community health care facility staff shall be used to provide that notification. However, if that is not possible, the CCC Director/designee or CFC shall assume that responsibility.

4. In the event that the NOK designated by the reentrant cannot be reached via telephone, the CCC Director/designee or CFC shall contact local law enforcement officials in the NOK's home location for assistance.
5. NOK notification shall be documented by the CCC Director/designee or CFC in the:
 - a. **DC-509**;
 - b. Webtas EOR; and
 - c. CAPTOR.
6. In all cases, the BCC Management Operations Center (MOC) shall notify the following agencies regarding a reentrant death:
 - a. Pennsylvania State Police (PSP);
 - b. OVA/Pennsylvania Parole Board (PB) Operations Monitoring Center (OMC); and
 - c. BCC Duty Officer.
7. The CCC Director/designee or CFC shall contact the Bureau of Health Care Services (BHCS) Director with a preliminary report of the reentrant's death and provide him/her with the deceased reentrant's Name, DOC Number, Date of Birth, Date of Death, and Social Security Number to obtain a copy of the Death Certificate. The autopsy and coroner's report and any additional reports such as toxicology reports, identification reports, local and/or PSP reports, etc., shall also be obtained and sent to BHCS and the support facility.
8. The MOC shall notify the support facility Records Office regarding the reentrant's death. If the death occurred after normal working hours, the death shall be reported to the support facility Records Office on the next business day.
9. The CCC Director/designee or CFC shall be responsible for obtaining an autopsy report if available. An accurate location of the body of the deceased reentrant will be maintained at all times until the body is claimed by the family of the deceased reentrant.
10. The CCC/Community Contract Facility (CCF) support facility Business Office shall provide assistance if the body of the deceased reentrant is not claimed by the reentrant's family.

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11. The CCC Director/designee or CFC shall complete and/or provide copies of the **DC-509; BCC-High Profile Report/Release Summary; MOC Email Notification; DC-121 Reports; and Webtas EOR** to:
 - a. **CR-BCC Administration;**
 - b. **CR, BCC MOC;**
 - c. BHCS Director;
 - d. Division of Treatment Services (DTS) Director;
 - e. State Intermediate Punishment (SIP)/State Drug Treatment Program (SDTP) Coordinator (if applicable); and
 - f. support facility Records Office.
12. The CCC Director/designee or CFC will ensure the completed **BCC-High Profile Report Checklist** is completed and returned to the Regional Director, MOC, and Investigating Commissioned Officer.
13. The CCC Director/designee or CFC shall coordinate with the support facility's CISM Team Leader in order to provide crisis intervention services for staff and reentrants. CISM shall be activated for all suicides.
14. The disposition of the personal effects of the deceased reentrant shall be secured at the CCC/CCF until the death investigation of the reentrant has concluded and the BCC Security Office approves the property to be relinquished to the NOK.
15. BCC staff will provide a copy of the **Unexpected Loss Brochure** to the deceased reentrant's NOK.



“One of the best ways I have heard grief described is like standing in the ocean with 100-foot waves crashing over you. They are unpredictable and seemingly relentless. But over time, the waves shrink in size and they come in more predictable patterns.” - Unknown

“Hope comes when a person realizes they are able to not only survive the waves, but they are able to stand in the ocean and not always get knocked down. As chaplains, our job is simply to stand in the ocean with them. We can only point the way to calmer waters, individuals have to swim there on their own” – L. Gordon Brewer JR

**The Department of
Corrections**
1920 Technology Parkway
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

Unexpected Loss



Our deepest sympathies to you and your family in this painful time of unexpected loss.

Learning of an unexpected death in a prison setting is extremely unsettling. Normal feelings of grief are compounded with a host of other deep emotions.

State Correctional Institution (SCI) Superintendents and Deputy Superintendents are committed to providing useful information and empathetic support, for you and your family during this difficult time.





What to Expect

When a loved one passes away within the Department of Corrections, departmental staff arrange for a Time of Remembrance through Chaplain Services.

The Chaplain's Office will invite the peers and staff to an internal service, at which time the sacred memory of your loved one will be honored.

A Facility Chaplain is available to assist with a Memorial Service outside the institution. If interested, please contact the Chaplain's Office.



Frequently Asked Questions

- * **Whom should I contact to get my loved one's personal belongings?**
SCI Deputy Superintendent for Facilities Management.
- * **How can I arrange funeral services?**
The Facility Chaplain may assist in coordinating funeral arrangements.
- * **What happened to my loved one?**
Unexpected deaths are reported to the PA State Police, who may conduct an investigation.
- * **Will an autopsy be performed?**
An autopsy will be performed at the discretion of the coroner.
- * **Additional concerns are to be directed to the SCI Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent and/or Central Office staff listed below.**

Central Office Staff

- * **Rev. Ulli Klemm, Religious Services Administrator – 717.728.0381**
- * **Kim Drum, Mental Health and Health Care Systems Advocate – 717.728.4134**
- * **Deb Sahd, Special Assistant to the Secretary – 717.728.4109**



Grief Support Resources

Grief is a deeply personal experience and is experienced by each person differently. For your convenience, and as an option, we have listed some community resources for you and your family to access to help facilitate the healing process.

- * www.hospiceandcommunitycare.org
- * www.hellogrief.org
- * www.correctionalchaplains.org
- * www.newsinhealth.nih.gov

