



NMVVRC

Readiness · Response · Resilience

National Mass Violence Victimization Resource Center
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
Medical University of South Carolina

“We Regret to Inform You..”

Providing Sensitive Death Notifications with Professionalism, Dignity and Compassion

This online training course is designed to help law enforcement officers, medical examiners, victim service professionals and other professionals make sensitive death notifications.

Content developed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Penn State University. To participate in the full-length training, please visit the site by using the QR code, tapping on the video or using the direct link.



<https://www.deathnotification.psu.edu/>



Special Circumstances & Key Considerations

1. Mass Casualty Incidents: Providing Multiple Death Notifications

- Each family should have its own death notification team
- Provide notifications in private
- Create realistic expectations for the next-of-kin
- Effective communication among jurisdictions

2. Social Media

- Social media can challenge the death notification process
- The next-of-kin may already be aware of the death and need confirmation
- The next-of-kin may be angry at the death notification team due to lapse of time for formal notification

3. Children

- Make sure children are not present for the initial notification
- Never use children to translate
- Death notification should be delivered by a person who the child trusts

4. Deceased Subject (Criminal Suspect)

- It is best practice not to utilize the same death notification team for the victim's family and the deceased subject's family
- Subject's next-of-kin notification
- Impact on victim's family

5. Cultural and Religious traditions should be taken into consideration when making a death notification

- Religious groups may have specific customs surrounding death and burial
- Some cultural groups may have additional practice of which you need to be aware

6. Demonstrate death notifications by utilizing best practices

- Recap of death notification by team delivering the notification
- Victim/survivor assistance

Make Sensitive Death Notifications Using a Four Step Process:

1. Plan
2. Prepare
3. Deliver
4. Follow-up



Scan to download tip sheet