

First 24 Hours Response Checklist

Structured guidance for responding to the death of a student in the first 24 hours.

A clear, compassionate response in the first 24 hours can significantly impact how a community begins to heal.



STEP 1 — Confirm & Stabilize

- Confirm details with family and authorities
- Verify accuracy before communicating
- Align with family on what can be shared
- Act quickly, but not at the expense of accuracy



STEP 2 — Activate Response Team

- Engage leadership, counseling, and communications
- Assign clear roles and responsibilities
- Establish internal communication channel



STEP 3 — Align Internal Communication

- Notify faculty and staff
- Provide talking points
- Ensure consistent and compassionate messaging



STEP 4 — Communicate with the Community

- Use official communication channels
- Provide age-appropriate information
- Avoid speculation
- Include support resources

STEP 5 — Activate Immediate Support

- Make counselors available
- Create safe, supervised spaces
- Communicate how to access support

STEP 6 — Identify & Monitor

- Identify those most impacted
- Encourage referrals to support services
- Monitor for signs of acute grief

CRITICAL REMINDERS

- Do not speculate
- Do not share unverified details
- Do not use sensational language
- Follow family wishes