
Death of a Service User Policy

Turas Training

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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. TURAS is committed to ensuring a respectful, immediate and appropriate response for service users, staff, volunteers and management in the event of a death within the service.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To ensure that an immediate and appropriate response is available for staff, volunteers and service users following an assumed death.
- 2.2. To ensure that the emergency services are immediately informed of any assumed death.
- 2.3. To ensure that the short- and long-term concerns of those involved in an incident are addressed by management through clear support structures. Supports are in place to ensure that traumatic events in the workplace do not create undue workplace stress or usurp workplace motivation.

3. Scope

- 3.1. The policy applies to all persons using the service, and must be applied by all staff, volunteers and locums in the service.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1. The manager is responsible for ensuring that service users and staff receive adequate support in the occasion of the death of a service user, at the same time as maintaining service delivery as much as possible.
- 4.2. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that this policy is fully administered, and that in the event of the death of a service user, their personal needs and the needs of service users are given due regard.

5. Procedures

- 5.1. Death on the premises - immediate action:
 - 5.1.1. When the staff member arrives at the scene he/she shall attempt to determine whether or not the person is still alive and that there is no immediate risk to them i.e. risk of electrocution etc. If safe to do so, check for breathing and pulse. If vital signs are present, and a staff member is available and trained in First Aid, they should commence CPR emergency care and or place the person in the recovery position whilst waiting for the emergency services to arrive.
 - 5.1.2. Staff will notify a manager immediately who will ensure emergency services are notified. Management are to be at the location as soon as possible and offer immediate support.
 - 5.1.3. If the manager is unavailable then staff should contact emergency services as soon as possible.
 - 5.1.4. Should the person appear to be dead, the area around the incident is to be cleared of people and sealed off. Every attempt should be made not to disturb the area surrounding the body of the deceased and any evidence (items potentially associated with the death) must be retained. The body can be covered if deemed appropriate.
 - 5.1.5. A member of staff should stay with the body until the Gardaí arrive, following this direction should be taken from Gardaí.
 - 5.1.6. Staff present should attempt to restore calm within the service and ensure that other service user's needs are met as much as is feasible.
 - 5.1.7. In the event of a death it is the responsibility of the Gardaí to inform the next of kin. If the service has details on the next of kin, these should be given to the Gardaí so they can make contact with the family of the deceased service user as quickly as possible. If the next-of-kin is also a client of TURAS, if appropriate (and in consultation with the Gardaí), a staff member may accompany Gardaí to inform the next-of-kin in order to provide support.
 - 5.1.8. All staff and volunteers present in the building will be informed of what has happened. If service users ask about what has happened, staff members may inform them that an incident has happened, but details should be kept to an absolute minimum in order to ensure the confidentiality of the deceased and privacy of the next-of-kin. It is also extremely

important that nobody, apart from emergency service staff, other staff members and management are informed of the death until it has been confirmed that the next-of-kin have been informed.

- 5.1.9. If service users already have knowledge of the death for whatever reason, the staff team must advise the Gardaí of the urgency in notifying the next of kin.
 - 5.1.10. Staff must make all relevant records available to the Gardaí.
 - 5.1.11. Staff must ensure that if they give a statement to the Gardaí they retain a copy of that statement for future reference.
 - 5.1.12. All initial external enquiries must be directed to the Gardaí.
 - 5.1.13. Following this Staff will be able to discuss the matter in appropriate manner with any friends or family of the deceased who they encounter through the day-to-day activities of the service.
 - 5.1.14. Ongoing external enquiries including media enquiries should be directed to the manager.
 - 5.1.15. Unless authorised by management, staff should not talk to the media.
 - 5.1.16. The removal of the deceased will be arranged by the attending doctor, or by a member of the Gardaí. Following the removal, the Gardaí will confirm to staff members when the room can be entered. Once confirmation of this has been received, the room must be locked and secured.
 - 5.1.17. Arrangements will be made by management to ensure that the area where the incident occurred is restored to its original condition as soon as possible, once authorised by the Gardaí.
- 5.2. Further action: general
- 5.2.1. Where appropriate a 'Response Team' consisting of senior staff will be brought together by the manager to co-ordinate responses to the situation.
 - 5.2.2. A full written record will be made of the incident, this is the responsibility of the manager on shift who attended to the incident; the report will be made available to senior management. The manager should obtain statements or input from any relevant staff. This report should include the following:
 - 5.2.2.1. service user details including details of the next-of-kin
 - 5.2.2.2. day, date, time and place of incident
 - 5.2.2.3. events that occurred before the incident (if known)
 - 5.2.2.4. Interventions and steps followed after initial contact with the death including who called emergency services, what time they were called, what time they arrived, and what they did.
 - 5.2.2.5. details of staff present
 - 5.2.2.6. Name of the person making the report
 - 5.2.2.7. Any arrests made, or anyone taken to hospital
 - 5.2.2.8. Debriefing / action plan
 - 5.2.3. Staff may also need to compile a separate report for the Gardaí outlining all relevant facts surrounding the death.
 - 5.2.4. Service users involved in the incident will be offered support by staff, through one-to-one sessions: within 24 hours if possible.
 - 5.2.5. Counselling will be arranged for any service user traumatised by the death.
 - 5.2.6. If suitable there will also be a check in with service users 1-2 weeks following the death, as issues and trauma may emerge following initial shock subsiding.
 - 5.2.7. Management and staff will review how the incident was handled as soon as possible after the event. Any learning from the incident and any agreed suggestions on how harm can be minimised in the future will be included into the relevant policies.
 - 5.2.8. All staff should have an opportunity to either participate in this discussion or to view and comment on any outcomes from the discussion.
 - 5.2.9. The manager of the organisation should consider if there are any aftercare needs of the deceased family.
 - 5.2.10. Any personal property of the deceased must be returned at an appropriate time in accordance with the wishes of the family.

- 5.2.11. An inventory list of items must be included.
 - 5.2.12. Managers must ensure that the return of the deceased property is conducted in a respectful and sensitive manner.
 - 5.2.13. If there is any doubt as to who should or should not have access to these items, it may be necessary to seek legal advice from our solicitor.
 - 5.2.14. However, once this has been clarified staff members can make arrangements to give family members access to the belongings.
 - 5.2.15. Staff who were not on shift at the time of the service user's death will be informed of the incident on their return to work.
 - 5.2.16. This will be done by the manager at the earliest convenience and the possibility of additional supports will be mentioned.
 - 5.2.17. Staff shall not speculate about the death with other residents or service-users. Questions of 'how' or 'why' in the case of suicide should be diverted. Information regarding specific details of the incident should be revealed sensitively and only when approved by the Gardaí.
 - 5.2.18. The manager should inform relevant agencies, and write to next-of-kin offering condolences (if known and consent for communication has previously been given by the service user), after Garda have informed next-of-kin.
 - 5.2.19. Once everyone has been informed, the manager will conduct an evaluation to determine any systemic issues, policies or resources that may have placed the service user at risk, the effectiveness of existing policies and procedures and whether they were followed and the adequateness of services. A copy of the evaluation report shall be forward to the Managers/Directors of the service.
- 5.3. Further action: supporting staff
- 5.3.1. Within 24 hours all staff and volunteers present in the project at the time of the incident will be contacted by management to arrange a de-briefing where supports will be offered, this may be either in group or one-to-one, where it is conducted in a group additional one-to-ones will also be offered to staff. The purpose of this de-brief is for support. Where it is possible the de-brief will be carried out by a senior manager or other relevant individual that was not involved in the incident, as de-briefing may not be as effective if the person running it is also affected by the incident.
 - 5.3.2. Where external resources are available these will be offered to all staff. Time limited counselling is seen a valued support where resources allow.
 - 5.3.3. If staff self-identify a need for counselling, this will be made available at the discretion of the manager and in reference to the existence of resources.
 - 5.3.4. If resources are not available other forms of support will be discussed and agreed between the staff member and the manager.
 - 5.3.5. Supervision will also provide an opportunity for staff to raise any subsequent issues regarding a service user's death. Supervision will be run in accordance with the Supervision Policy although following a death will also include a specific question as to how the staff member is managing the recent death.
 - 5.3.6. Management will provide its full support to staff, volunteers and service users who are obliged to be involved in any ongoing or long-term legal proceedings following a death in a project.
 - 5.3.7. Ongoing or long-term legal proceedings are recognised as stressful and supports will be provided to reduce staff burden in this situation.
 - 5.3.8. Where practicable provision is made for all staff that might wish to attend the removal, funeral or removal ceremony.
 - 5.3.9. Where such attendance might compromise the provision of essential services attendance will be negotiated between staff and the manager.
 - 5.3.10. Staff will be encouraged to mark the death in a way which is appropriate to their needs and those of the service; this will be facilitated by management as long as it does not negatively affect the running of the service.