

# Sample Scripts for In-Person Notification

## Cause of death is confirmed as suicide

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that [Name] has died by suicide. All of us want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.

A death of a colleague presents us with many questions that we may not be able to answer right away or at all due to patient confidentiality. Rumors may begin to circulate, and we ask that you not spread rumors you may hear. We'll do our best to give you accurate information as it becomes known to us.

**It is important to remember that death by suicide often is caused by a confluence of several stressors in an individual's life. There are risk factors, but those may not have fully been known to family, colleagues, and friends; further, it can be difficult to recognize that someone is getting overwhelmed by such internal turmoil.**

Each of us will react to [Name]'s death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may not have known [Name] very well and may not be as affected, while others may experience a great deal of sadness whether you knew [Name] or not. All types of emotions are common following the loss of someone you know—sadness, confusion, guilt, anger, numbness. Some of you may find you're having difficulty concentrating, and others may find that diving into such activities as your work or exercise are good distractions.

We have counselors available to help you deal with this sad loss and to enable us to understand more about how to stay healthy. If you'd like to talk to a counselor, these are the contacts: [Contacts].

Sometimes, as health care providers, we may feel responsible for the death of a colleague. We may wonder if there was something that we could have done differently. First, remember that [Name] was a colleague, a friend, and that [Name] was not your patient. Although we are not able to predict death, we do know that reaching out for help and talking saves lives. If you are worried about one of your colleagues, please reach out to them and have a caring conversation or let us know about your concern.

This is a time to take a moment to be together, to remember [Name] in our grief, and to support one another. Please remember that we are all here for you.

Cause of death is unconfirmed →

## Cause of death is unconfirmed

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that [Name] has died. All of us want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.

The cause of death has not yet been determined by the authorities. We recognize that uncertainty can fuel anxiety and stress. We are aware that there has been some talk about the possibility that this was a death due to [manner or cause of death, eg, COVID-19, suicide]. Rumors may begin to circulate, and we ask you only to share information known to be factual since inaccurate information can be hurtful to those coping with this loss. Please also be mindful of the use of social media in discussing this event. We'll do our best to give you accurate information as it becomes known to us.

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Sometimes, as health care providers, we may feel responsible for the death of a colleague. We may wonder if there was something that we could have done differently. First, remember that [Name] was a colleague, a friend, and that [Name] was not your patient. *[In case of death by suicide, consider adding information along these lines: Although we are not able to predict death, we do know that reaching out for help and talking saves lives. If you are worried about one of your colleagues, please reach out to them and have a caring conversation or let us know about your concern.]*

This is a time to take a moment to be together, to remember [Name] in our grief, and to support one another. Please remember that we are all here for you.

Cause of death may not be disclosed →

## Cause of death may not be disclosed

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that [Name] has died. All of us want you to know that we are here to help you in any way we can.

The [family or emergency contact] has requested that information about the cause of death not be shared at this time.

We recognize that uncertainty can fuel anxiety and stress. We are aware that there has been some talk about the possibility that this was a death from [manner or cause of death, eg, COVID-19, suicide]. Rumors may begin to circulate, and we ask that you only share information known to be factual since inaccurate information can be hurtful to those coping with this loss. We'll do our best to give you accurate information as it becomes known to us and as we are allowed to share.

Each of us will react to [Name]'s death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may not have known [Name] very well and may not be as affected, while others may experience a great deal of sadness whether you knew [Name] or not. All types of emotions are common following the loss of someone you know—sadness, confusion, guilt, anger, numbness. Some of you may find you're having difficulty concentrating, and others may find that diving into such activities as your work or exercise are good distractions.

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This is a time to take a moment to be together, to remember [Name] in our grief, and to support one another. Please remember that we are all here for you.

*Reprinted with permission from [After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Physician Residency/Fellowship Programs](#) developed by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and Mayo Clinic.*

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