

How to Respond to Employee Bereavement and Grief



Sad things happen to employees and coworkers. Family members die, get ill and have accidents. When bereavement and grief happen, staff members can also be profoundly affected.

When an employee calls or stops by with a sorrowful life situation, managers should offer genuine sympathy and support as a first step. Managers should then be prepared to talk about options available through the company and involve Human Resources who will be up-to-date on the bereavement time off policy, FMLA, who to contact about health benefits, short and long-term disability and life insurance.

Appropriate ways to express sympathy:

- ☐ Collect money for the employee.
- ☐ Take a dish to the funeral dinner or wake.
- ☐ Line up home-cooked dinners for several weeks for a bereaved family or a family with a loved one requiring daily hospital visits.
- ☐ Send flowers or a plant to funerals, homes, and hospitals.
- ☐ Have coworkers close to the employee sign a group card.

Almost all contributions are welcome and appreciated. However, please don't go to an employee's home or the hospital without checking with the employee or family first. Your visit may not be welcome, ask first.

Sometimes, a simple note that says you care and are keeping the employee and their family in your thoughts is sufficient.

