

Death Investigations and Notifications

Next of kin, co-victims, and other individuals impacted by unexpected deaths of family members and loved ones often describe mixed experiences with the justice system. Some describe not receiving information about their rights, having challenges with victim compensation, receiving no referrals to address their needs, and minimal communication with investigators. Others describe contact with agency personnel who are empathetic and committed to helping them seek desired case outcomes.

Incorporating victim services personnel during death investigations and delivery of death notifications can enhance case activity and outcomes, co-victims' experiences during interactions, and police-community relationships.

Promising Agency Practices

- ✓ **Conduct joint death notifications with victim services and sworn personnel.**
- ✓ **Co-facilitate death notification training by victim services and sworn personnel during academy, field training, and annual in-service training opportunities.**
- ✓ **Embed victim services personnel into specialized units that investigate homicides.**
- ✓ **Ensure around the clock field response by victim services personnel to incidents of investigated deaths when Victim Services Unit structure and staffing levels are appropriate.**
- ✓ **Revise policies to include the role of victim services personnel during death investigations and delivery of death notifications.**

Helpful Resources

- **[Death Notifications Policy – Template \(OVC\)](#)**
- **[Effective Delivery of Death Notifications – Training Material \(OVC\)](#)**
- **[We Regret to Inform You... \(psu.edu\)](#)**