Guidelines for Unexpected Death of Medical Student
(modified from SKMC and HEMHA postvention)

*International Student - refer to the Addendum Protocol on the Death of an International Student,

BACKGROUND:
While a student death (e.g., accident, suicide, infectious process) is rare, a medical school must be prepared to respond quickly during the tragedy, secure the campus, provide support and services to the student’s family, classmates, and the campus at large. A well-designed plan, as with any crisis, allows for the best outcome during a tragedy.

PREPARATION:
1. Develop a program and properly orient students and staff.
2. Individualize and regularly review the campus guidelines. Include backup plans and be prepared to set priorities for the school and delegate tasks including, identifying a team leader.
3. Identify an interdisciplinary crisis response team (e.g., member of the president’s and/or dean’s office, student affairs, academic affairs, counseling center, and campus security/campus police). Consider other important university offices: registrar, financial aid, housing, university counsel, risk management, pastoral care, international office, environmental services, IT department, university health center, public relations, which can streamline a coordinated response and provide comprehensive support. Contact information for the members should be updated and readily available.

RESPONSE TO CRISIS:
1. Verify identity and residency address of student with security department and/or local police (e.g., ID verification system).
2. Activate the crisis response team and delegate a point person to coordinate the situation.
3. Activate the communication plan (below).
4. Address non-immediate action items.

COMMUNICATION PLAN (TO BE DELEGATED BY CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM):
1. Construct a network to offer appropriate support to all involved parties (e.g., meeting the family, arranging a meeting for the family with the attending physician, and counseling friends). Continue to follow the emergency situation as necessary and update the Office of the President/Chancellor, the Dean, the media, etc., as necessary.
2. Notify family of the student’s death and offer any support or assistance. The following are issues that may require attention and University support in the death of a student.
   a. Travel to the area/campus.
   b. Funeral Arrangements/Repatriation. Determine the extent of insurance coverage of the deceased and assist the family in making the necessary arrangements.
c. If necessary, aid the family in contacting the medical examiner’s office for positive identification and the funeral director.

2. Inform the Office of the President/Chancellor and the Dean of the medical college.
3. Notify the campus’ mental health and grief support services.
4. If appropriate, inform student’s roommates and close friends. This is generally best done with the family’s permission and through the coordination of the dean for student affairs. Housing personnel, if applicable and the mental health services should be involved.
5. Contact the public relations and communication department. When appropriate, provide information to the University and the external community. Must take into account the sensitivity of the situation, the family concerns and further threat to the campus.
6. If the student or resident lives in University housing, notify the Residential Manager on duty or designated personnel.
7. If an international student, notify the director for the international office.
8. In the case of an accident, inform campus security/campus police, if not already done. In the case of a violent death (related to a criminal act), security/police serves as a liaison between the university or hospital and the appropriate law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction.
9. Inform the appropriate course/clerkship director.
10. Send a letter of condolence sent to the family from the President or Dean.

SUPPORT SERVICES:
1. Offer information about local mental health resources for the families and close friends.
2. Provide grief and mental health resources for the student body and university staff.
3. Target support services for vulnerable students on campus.
4. Make available academic support as needed.

POST-IMMEDIATE CONCERNS:
1. Ceremonies (Funeral announcements, campus memorial service/remembrance celebrations). Ensure that such an announcement and event is a sign of respect and honor and is supported by the family. If so, the student affair dean or other designated staff should take the lead in coordinating these events.
2. Belongings of the deceased. Assist family or friends with the packing and shipping of belongings, if needed.
3. Disposition of Assets and Liabilities. Involve Financial Aid in a discussion with the family regarding university expenses and student loans. Ascertain whether the student's family is due any reimbursement or any of the student's tuition. Assist the family with handling of matters such as, bank accounts; house or apartment leases; bills for telephone service, utilities, credit cards, etc.; and, possibly an automobile. Determine relevant legal requirements and assist family in conducting this business.
4. Confirm change in University status in the case of students. Contact the student promotions committee and appropriate offices. Explore if student is eligible to graduate posthumously. Make certain that the appropriate University offices know to delete the student from the current student roster to avoid embarrassing future correspondence (e.g., tuition and registration information for the following academic year, invitation to alumni events).
5. Use the Student Death Response checklist to determine if appropriate measures have been taken and all necessary notifications have been made.
6. Consider campus judicial board procedures if another student is responsible for death.