Dealing With Tragedy In The Campus Community

People who work together are often like extended families. When a person dies, co-workers, like family members, grieve this loss. When the death is unexpected, as from an accident, it can be traumatic. Feelings and symptoms of grief are often expressed over weeks, months and years.

There isn't a specific timetable people follow while grieving. It is important to grieve as an individual and recognize that there might be a workgroup reaction as well.

Grief is a process that we must all go through. Reactions to grief can vary between individuals. The reaction may include difficulty sleeping, emotional and physical exhaustion, overwhelming sadness, and concentration difficulties. The extent, depth and duration of the grieving process will depend on how close people were to the deceased, the circumstances of the death, and their previous experiences with loss and death.

HR’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can provide support through meetings with the work group to discuss the impact of the death and through individual counseling. Our EAP website contains many helpful resources for individuals, work groups and departmental administrators.

A death in our campus community can be difficult and needs a compassionate response. Please contact our office at eap@tamu.edu or 845-3711 to see how we may help you during such a difficult time.
Should Social Media Be Used In Recruitment?

Should social media be used in recruiting new employees at Texas A&M? This question is frequently debated by human resource experts.

The question has two parts when considering the recruiting process: using social media sites to recruit candidates; and using social media sites to screen or review applicants. As a recruiting tool, Social media is used by approximately 77% of companies and higher education to reach potential applicants for specific positions. This practice is being used more and more and seems to be very low risk. Texas A&M HR recently began posting a “Job of the Week” on our HR Facebook page, for example.

The second part of the question is when the risks elevate and the percentage of companies and institutions using social media to screen or review applicants drops dramatically. Why is this? There are legal concerns and risks of discovering information on social media about protected applicant characteristics that are not job-related. The legal risks center primarily on the validity or accuracy of the information that can be obtained from social media because information can be posted about an individual from anyone. Information on protected characteristics can also be obtained, such as race, age, gender or religious affiliation, all of which should not be used in the A&M hiring decision because it is not job-related.

Bottom line: social media is a great tool for posting positions but should not be used to screen or review job applicants.

Texas A&M Staff Appreciation Week, March 23-27

Staff Appreciation Week is back by popular demand! The University Staff Council (USC) is again joining forces with Human Resources (HR) to plan events for the week of March 23-27 to recognize our outstanding staff at Texas A&M!

Learn more about Staff Appreciation Week online and look for additional information to be communicated once more events are finalized.

We encourage departments to plan now to host events within your offices. Visit the HR site for employee recognition resources including “no cost or low cost ideas” and review a list of popular department events/ideas to spark some ideas about what your department can do.

Supervisors, remember that a simple “thank you” goes a long way to motivate and recognize employees. Let them know their contributions matter to Texas A&M and to you!
Healthy Resolutions: Let Wellness Works Help!

Did you make New Year’s resolutions and have you stuck with them? Don’t give up. Every step you take to improve your wellbeing makes a difference, and Wellness Works can help you!

If your resolution was to stop using tobacco products, we have tobacco cessation resources online. Want to save more, we have voluntary retirement plans. Need to manage stress, see our EAP services. Want more activity, to lose weight or increased health awareness, take a look at the following Wellness Works programs and initiatives:

- **Walk Across Texas - February 7 thru April 4** - Eight week physical activity program to encourage greater activity levels. Form teams now.
- **Health & Wellness Fair - March 4** - Visit the information booths, attend a "mini-chat" and see wellness demonstrations. Save the date now!
- **BCS Chamber Water Cooler 5k Run/Walk April 9** - Texas A&M is again supporting this Chamber event encouraging you to take a stroll or clock your fastest time yet. Open to all fitness levels. Registration will open soon, so watch for more details.

We also have online monthly Health Awareness Bulletins to increase your awareness levels. Coming soon: Complete a monthly quiz for a chance to win prizes!

Take advantage of these FREE programs and other Wellness Works resources to help you achieve your New Year’s resolution and live a healthier lifestyle. Wishing you a healthy and happy 2015!

Can Employee Relations & Policy & Practice Review Help You?

Effective business practices are essential for a safe and productive environment. Employee Relations (ER) and Policy & Practice Review (P&PR) can help employees, supervisors and administrators resolve issues that may impact productivity and overall morale.

Employee Relations staff provides consultative services focused on preventing and resolving issues related to workplace conflict, progressive discipline, rule interpretation, and performance management. In addition, you can contact Employee Relations regarding alternate work locations and official personnel record questions. Contact us at employee-relations@tamu.edu or 979.862.4027.

The P&PR staff provides consultation, investigation and response to supervisors and employees concerning discrimination or other civil rights issues, complaints and appeals regarding disciplinary actions, and workplace accommodations in accordance to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Contact us at hrpolicy@tamu.edu or 979.862.3331.
TO YOUR BENEFIT

SEBAC Election Coming this Spring

Election season is upon us - not for a political office, but for your elected representative on the SEBAC committee. SEBAC is the System Employee Benefits Advisory Committee, which serves as an advisory group that studies the design, operation and administration of the various benefit plans and makes recommendations to System Benefits Administration on behalf of A&M System employees and retirees.

Elections for the Texas A&M University SEBAC representative (serving the FY16 & FY17 term) will be held this Spring with the nomination and election process coordinated by Human Resources. More information regarding the SEBAC election process will be provided as the election nears; however, start considering now who you may want to nominate for this important committee—including yourself.

The next scheduled SEBAC meeting is on February 3rd at the John Connally Building. Learn more about SEBAC meetings and how to reach your elected and other appointed representatives by visiting the SEBAC webpage.

Setting SMART Goals

Setting goals is not difficult. Achieving the goals, however, can be challenging!

Often, the key to achieving that higher rate of success is to use a SMART goal-planning process. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, identify necessary Resources, and set a realistic Timetable. The goal is the achievement; getting there is the purpose of a SMART goal.

For example, notice how each of the SMART goal elements are present in Sandy’s goal: “Sandy will create an inventory spreadsheet for department equipment. The spreadsheet will be available on March 15, 2015 on the network drive. Sandy will take EOD’s Microsoft Excel class, and she will discuss the project status with her supervisor during their monthly progress review meetings.”

Since the best goals challenge and motivate us to learn and grow, the PATHways Performance Management process encourages the creation of SMART goals, which are documented in the employee’s Performance Plan. Learn more on the PATHways website.
**EOD Team Receives Innovation Award**

HR’s Employee and Organizational Development team received a national award for its Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace (DIW) certificate program!

The HR Innovation Award is given annually by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources in recognition of an innovation that “advances the HR profession or contributes to the overall excellence of the profession.”

DIW introduces participants to the value of diversity and inclusion, raises awareness about their perspectives and how their actions impact others, and offers strategies for creating and maintaining a workplace that not only accepts but also values diversity. Employees are given 18 months to complete the program at their own pace, and many earn their certificate in far less time.

The program, which supports the Diversity & Respect behavioral competency on the staff performance evaluation, is offered to all Texas A&M employees. Information including enrollment instructions is found on the [DIW website](#).

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**Flexible Work Schedule**

Offering employees a flexible work schedule isn’t something new at Texas A&M, it has been around for decades. In fact, all regular employees are eligible to apply for this work benefit.

A flexible work schedule (or flextime) permits you to work a predetermined and approved variation of a standard work schedule. You may use flexible work arrangements to respond to the needs of employees, increase productivity, and/or enhance the service capabilities.

Your employees are still expected to complete the required number of work hours in a workweek (e.g., 40 hours for a full-time employee), but it doesn’t have to be the traditional 8 hours per day. For example, staff may work 9 hours a day Monday through Thursday and 4 hours Friday, or they may work any combination of hours as long as they: 1) work a full workweek, 2) the supervisor agrees to the schedule, and 3) they complete the required approval forms.

Learn more about [flextime](#) on the HR website, and then talk to your employees about it. A flexible work schedule might be just what you are looking for to make a happier, more satisfying workplace for you and your employees.
SUPER SUPERVISORS

Performance Evaluations—Best Practices

Performance evaluations are but one part of the overall performance management process. At Texas A&M we call this process PATHways; it’s intended to create an ongoing dialogue between you the supervisor and employees throughout the year. It also enhances your supervisor/employee relationship by incorporating clear communication and constructive feedback throughout the performance review period.

With performance evaluations right around the corner, here are some best practices to help you and your employees get the most out of the performance evaluation.

To create a comprehensive evaluation, supervisors are advised to:

- Ask employees to complete a Self Assessment to provide input on their accomplishments as well as any extenuating circumstances they wish for you to consider
- Review the progress notes they’ve made over the year
- Consider customer feedback received during the evaluation period
- Double check that the evaluation is a fair and balanced reflection of the year’s performance and demonstration of behavioral competencies.

To increase the effectiveness of evaluations, consider the following:

- Print the evaluation in draft form and give it to the employee prior to the meeting so that they may review it and use the meeting as a time for discussion
- Conduct meetings face-to-face and in a private setting
- Provide feedback about strengths and areas for improvement
- Discuss career goals and developmental needs.

By using these best practices, you are able to help your employees to better reach successful outcomes. When employees are successful, supervisors are successful, and this contributes to the overall success of the department and University.

Be sure to check out the PATHways webpage for other helpful information, including demos, online and classroom training, step-by-step procedures, FAQs, a supervisor checklist, and much more. Start your PATHways to success today!
IN OTHER NEWS

Sustainable Office Certification

Human Resources is proud to announce that we have received a 2 star rating in the Sustainable Office Certification program!

The Office of Sustainability implemented this program to help make Texas A&M’s faculty and staff more aware of sustainable practices that can be easily incorporated into everyday life, while collectively reducing the consumption. A few changes in communications, purchasing, meetings, and social sustainability helped HR obtain this recognition. Learn more about this certification program online.

FBI Alert: HR/Payroll Scam

Beware of fraudulent emails asking University employees to change HR or Payroll information. This email contains a link directing employees to login to Single Sign-On to access HR or Payroll information to make a change. The website provided appears very similar to the legitimate Single Sign-On site but once you enter your user name and password, the scammers have it and may hack your account for personal data!

Interim President Dr. Hussey sent a campus-wide email alerting employees about the scam and how to protect yourself. Read the memo online.

IN OTHER NEWS

“I like working at A&M because…”

“I love what I do and the people I work with; they are my second family! I am blessed to have such a great job and I thank God every day!”

Tamra Ray
Business Associate III
Computing Information Services

“I think this is the greatest place on earth! Walt Disney was wrong.”

Andy Armstrong
Director of Advising
College of Liberal Arts

“The partnership between the University and the employees is great. I’m blessed to be part of this excellent group of people.”

Jovana Guillen
Business Coordinator II
Academic Affairs Business Services
HR MISSION:
We provide human resource programs, services and expertise that foster employee and organizational success.

HR CORE VALUES:
- **INTEGRITY**
  We demonstrate uncompromising commitment to honesty and accountability.
- **RESPECT**
  We treat all people with dignity, recognizing diversity and unique experiences, perspectives and contributions.
- **QUALITY**
  We strive for excellence in meeting our customers’ expectations.
- **EXPERTISE**
  We develop and apply the highest level of knowledge and skills to address our customers' needs.

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Human Resources publishes **HR EXPRESS** three times per year to promote HR-related services and information for Texas A&M University employees.

Editor: Pamela A. Praesel, Communications Manager
Contributors: Human Resources Staff

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**HR CALENDAR**

**Highlights for Spring 2015**

**FEBRUARY**

- 2/3  SEBAC Meeting
- 2/3  Brown Bag Lunch & Learn Series: Walking Tips
- 2/5  HR Liaison Network Spring Meeting
- 2/7  Walk Across Texas: February 7 – April 4
- 2/11  Benefits Orientation & New Employee Welcome Orientation
- 2/13  Coffee Conversations - Hot Topics in Higher Education
- 2/25  President’s Meritorious Service Awards

**MARCH**

- 3/4  Health & Wellness Fair
- 3/11  Benefits Orientation & New Employee Welcome Orientation
- 3/13  Coffee Conversations - Hot Topics in Higher Education
- 3/18-20  University Holiday – Spring Break
- 3/23-27  Staff Appreciation Week
- 3/24  Maroon & White Wellness Walk
- 3/26  EOD Certificate Program Recognition Reception

**APRIL**

- 4/1  Performance Evaluation Begins
- 4/7  Brown Bag Lunch & Learn Series: Sleeping Well
- 4/8  Benefits Orientation & New Employee Welcome Orientation
- 4/9  Wellness Works: Water Cooler 5k Fun Run/Walk
- 4/10  Coffee Conversations - Hot Topics in Higher Education

**MAY**

- 5/13  Benefits Orientation & New Employee Welcome Orientation
- 5/25  University Holiday – Memorial Day
- 5/31  Performance Evaluation Ends

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Remaining University Holidays for FY15:

- Spring Break
  March 18–20, 2015
- Memorial Day
  May 25, 2015

The University holiday schedule for FY 2016 will be established by the Texas A&M System Board of Regents at their summer meeting. Learn more.

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What classes does HR Employee & Organizational Development offer?

- **EOD Training Calendar**

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What’s happening around campus?

- **Texas A&M Calendar of Events**