
GRIEF SUPPORT

1. PHILOSOPHY

- 1.1 The intent of this policy is to provide grief support to the families of deceased individuals who are not transported from the field. Grief Support will be available to assist families in dealing with the death of a family member.
- 1.2 Field personnel should identify the need for grief support **as soon as possible**, especially for an unexpected death or if considering discontinuation of CPR in the field.
- 1.3 Field personnel should follow their agency/department procedure for initiating grief support

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 Assist the family in dealing with the death, or anticipated death, of the patient.
- 2.2 If resuscitation is in progress determine if the family wants the patient transported to the hospital.
- 2.3 Once death has been determined:
 - ▶ remain on scene with the family to provide support and assist with decisions
 - ▶ contact all appropriate agencies (e.g. Police, Coroner) if not already done
 - ▶ remove all medical equipment used during the resuscitation if cleared by the Coroner's bureau (see "Death in the Field - Discontinuation of CPR" [page 80](#)).
 - ▶ assist with the notification of clergy, if requested
 - ▶ provide information regarding the disposition of the remains

3. GRIEF SUPPORT GUIDELINES:

Breaking the News. . .

- Physically join the family.
- Introduce yourself.
- Go over with the family what has been done, what interventions have been tried.
- *"The paramedics (we) found your [husband, wife, daughter, etc.] not breathing. We began CPR. I am very sorry to tell you but your [husband, wife, daughter, etc.] has died."*
- Give the family time to react don't leave.

Grief Support Skills

- Ask the family if there is someone they would like you to call. Find a neighbor.
- Things to say:
 - ▶ *"Mrs. Smith, tell me what happened today"*
 - ▶ *"I am sorry Joe has died."*
 - ▶ *"This is a difficult time, it is OK to cry"*
 - ▶ *"You may not remember all I have said right now and that's OK."*
 - ▶ *"I will be available later to talk to you"*
 - ▶ *"I don't know but I will find out"*
- Remember: You cannot fix grief. Just give it an honest and safe place to exist.
- Give the family the grief support brochure.

Tell the family what happens next

- The coroner must be notified (Paramedics and/or police to do this)
- Ask if the family has selected a mortuary.
- Get the private doctors name and as much patient history as possible (including medications that indicate specific medical conditions)

Coroner's Case

- Cause of death must be investigated.
- Investigator can explain more.
- Police must stay if a coroner's case. (may choose to stay until mortuary arrives if not a coroner's case)
- Mortuary will pick up at coroner's office.
- Explain scene preservation nothing may be moved or disturbed.

Mortuary Case

- Family should choose and call a mortuary.
- Ask family/friends/church for suggestion.
- Mortuary will come to the scene.
- Remove and dispose of all medical equipment.
- Body may be left with family if they are OK and not a coroner's case. Ask how they feel.

Knowing when to Leave

- Tell them it is time for you to go *"is there anything else I can do?"*
- Go through the grief support brochure, point out referral numbers. Give them your card or how they can reach you.
- Offer your condolences shake hands or touch if appropriate.
- Leave