

Supporting Employees After a Suicide

When a co-worker dies by suicide there can be overwhelming feelings of guilt and grief, even by those who may not have been close to the employee. Leadership should consider the impacts to the overall psychological health and safety of the workplace related to the suicide.

- » **Give employees the option of attending any funeral or memorial service.**
- » **Watch for employee reactions** and ensure that employees are managing their grief and feelings. Provide help if they are not.
- » **Understand that reaction to a suicide will vary significantly.** Some employees who may not have even known the deceased may be overcome with emotion, while others who were close to the employee may appear to be unaffected.
- » **Recognize that managers may also have feelings of guilt** and grief related to the suicide death or attempt and should be supported.
- » **Ensure there is appropriate support in place** for staff members who have been impacted, e.g. Employee Assistance Programs or community mental health agencies.
- » **Provide education.** Being aware of the complexities of suicide can help co workers accept there may not have been anything they could have done to prevent the suicide.
- » **Involve interested employees in organizing a tribute** to the deceased employee. This can help with healing.
- » **Be aware of risk for survivors.** People who have recently experienced a loss by suicide are at increased risk for having suicidal thoughts themselves. After experiencing the loss of a loved one, it's not uncommon for individuals to wish they were dead or to feel like the pain is unbearable. Remember that having suicidal thoughts does not mean that one will act on them. These feelings and thoughts will likely decrease over time, but if one finds them too intense, or if considering putting those thoughts into action, encourage one to seek support from a mental health professional.