

**Infrastructure Properties and Planning (IPP) Guidelines for
Support of Life Events for Staff Members**

July 10, 2015

Life Events are defined as marriages, births, adoptions, or the death of someone in an employee's immediate family (as defined in policy 6.9 Time Away From Work – Funeral Leave*).

Communications

- For life events such as births, adoptions, birthdays, marriages, etc. direct supervisors and coworkers are encouraged to respond as they see fit depending on the situation and relationship – however any type of “gift” would need to be a “collection-based” donation from employees *as this type of expense is considered “unallowable” by University business policy.*
- With regard to condolences for loss of an employee or a member of their immediate family*, the Associate Vice President/Senior Director of the employee's department/area is encouraged to send a hand-signed card on behalf of the department. Policy 3.14 Business Expenses, Section 2 c. allows for flowers or an equivalent donation in the event of loss of an immediate family member. *(This expense is federally unallowable. Coordination with the Sr. Director of Finance is required to assist in expense standardization and processing)*

Ordering flowers for loss of an employee or a member of their immediate family

In accordance with the Life Events guidelines we have established an agreement with a few local florists to standardize orders in the event of the loss of an employee or an employee's immediate family member (as defined in policy 6.9 Time Away From Work – Funeral Leave).

When you phone in your order please indicate you're with Cornell's IPP Division, each florist is aware and will assist in our goal to streamline our orders. These orders should be under \$75.00 including delivery or out of town ordering.

French Lavender Florist

607.277.3171

<http://www.frenchlavenderflowers.com/>

903 Mitchell Street, Ithaca, NY 14850

Options: French Lavender does not have specific named arrangements on the site. Please stay consistent with the other options when you call to order. Total must not exceed \$75.00.

Please note - they do not place orders outside their delivery area which is Ithaca and the surrounding towns.

Ithaca Flower Shop

1201 N Tioga Street, Ithaca, NY 14850-3603

(607)273-0600

(800)448-1762

http://www.ithacaflowershop.com/ithaca-florist/sympathy-funeral-flowers-87_144678c.asp

Options: Dish Garden, Vivid Recollections, Basket of Light

Please note: they will send any orders beyond their delivery area to another florist for us.

Michaleen's Florist

Phone: 607-257-3203

Email: mickey@michaleens.com

Michaleen's is located at: 2826 North Tripphammer Road, Ithaca, NY 14850

<http://www.michaleens.com/cart.php>

Options: Dish Garden, Peace Lilly, Sympathy Vase

Orders may be placed online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Please note: they will send any orders beyond their delivery area to another florist for us.

Making a donation in lieu of sending flowers:

A donation can be made for \$75.00 in lieu of sending flowers.

For charitable contributions of \$75.00, you do not need to seek approval.

In some cases you will be able to use a PCard to process these payments. The transaction should be supported with a receipt, copy of the obituary, and charity information.

If a PCard is not accepted, then an IWNT doc should be submitted with a copy of the obituary, contact information for the charity and any special instructions.

For staff experiencing life events, Cornell University offers a variety of support services. The following guidelines outline what is available and attached is a suggested communication from Infrastructure, Planning, and Properties leadership and colleagues.

Support for new parents

Cornell University has been voted one of the best employers in the nation for parents. A wealth of resources are available from preparing for a baby workshops, adoption assistance, child care guidance, parents leave, etc. All of the information can be found at this link:

<https://hr.cornell.edu/life/support/children.html>.

Support for loss

The Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP) offers services related to grief and loss counseling. Upon request, FSAP will meet with work teams and help the group discuss loss. Attached is a document supervisors and coworkers can use.

Celebrating life events

Employees disclose different levels of information about their personal lives. Depending on the employee's preference, celebrating marriages, new babies, and other life changes can be a morale booster and show employees that others care about them.

**"The immediate family consists of a spouse, domestic partner, child, stepchild, sibling, parent, stepparent, grandparent, grandchild, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law."*

GRIEVING: HELPING A FRIEND OR CO-WORKER

When a friend or co-worker has experienced a traumatizing event and/or is grieving the loss of a loved one, we may feel helpless as to what to say or do to support him or her. Because we don't know what to say or do we may find ourselves avoiding him or her and, despite our desire to do something, we do nothing. Unfortunately, our avoidance only serves to intensify our own discomfort with the situation and to increase the sense of isolation that our co-worker is experiencing.

A person who has been traumatized and is grieving needs friends and family to be with them and remind them that they are not alone, to listen to them unconditionally, to support them while they work-through their pain, to encourage them, to remind them that they are loved and needed, and to help them believe that they will survive and find peace again someday, some way.

The following are suggestion for helping a friend or co-worker through the grieving process.

- ❖ Approach your co-worker. Always speak from the heart and with good intention. Let them know that you don't know what to say or do and that you just want them to know that your thoughts are with them and that you are there for them. You can tell them that you are sorry that they are hurting. You can ask them how they are doing. You can ask them if there is anything you can do to help. You can offer to help in whatever way they may need help, for however long. If you are uncomfortable sharing your support face to face, you can send a card, note or email.
- ❖ If they want to tell the story of their event or loss, they will; just listen. If you feel the need to respond to their story, you can tell them that you can only imagine their pain, or that you don't know what to say or how to respond. If they express feelings of guilt, listen knowing that they are not expecting answers from you; feelings that are causing difficulty for them are part of the grieving process, and need to be expressed over and over again until they resolve themselves. Avoid using clichés—sometimes it is better to say nothing, and to simply acknowledge that you know that this is a difficult and painful time for them.
- ❖ It is difficult to know what to say when they ask “Why did this happen?” Know that this is an unanswerable question, an expression of their pain rather than a question that they expect you to answer. Remaining silent or responding “I don't know why” is enough.
- ❖ Sometimes there is nothing to say and sitting in silence, being fully present and bearing witness is enough.
- ❖ Allow him or her to cry, and don't be afraid to cry with him or her.
- ❖ Help in practical ways. Everyday tasks can be overwhelming for a while following a trauma or loss. If possible take on some of their responsibilities or workload. Bring in food for them to take home for dinner, buy food cards or gift certificate to a local restaurant, run errands for them or offer child care so that they can have time to be alone.
- ❖ Grief comes in waves so expect good days and bad days. The first year following a significant loss is the most difficult because of birthdays, anniversaries, special days and holidays. On good days your friend or co-worker will want to get on with life, have a sense of optimism and hope, and return to normal functioning; on bad days he or she will do less and will need extra care, patience and understanding. Expect a wide range of emotions to come and go; mood swings and variation in performance should be expected. He or she may be uncharacteristically irritable, angry, and easily frustrated at times and may take it out on the people closest to them without realizing it; make allowances for this. Be a mirror for your friend or co-worker and gently let him or her know when he or she is negatively impacting others or when his or her performance is suffering.
- ❖ Be patient, adjusting to a traumatic event and grieving takes time. Talk with your own support group, your supervisor or a counselor if you need help in understanding or responding to your friend or co-worker's pain. **Call the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP) at 255-2673.**