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## Acknowledging the Death

### **The Pause**

Regardless of how exposure to a fatality happens, it is essential to acknowledge or announce the death with seriousness and respect—and to recognize the human dimension of the loss of life that has occurred. It is recommended that you consider the components of a practice called *The Pause* in developing procedures for how a death is acknowledged when someone dies in the workplace or how it is announced when a death occurs elsewhere. Components of The Pause to consider:\*\*

- Stop for a moment and intentionally create a space for service providers to acknowledge that the person has died.
- Through affirmation, silence, and/or other respectful means, honor the person who died, the life they led, and the people they touched.
- Express gratitude for the efforts that were made to help the person and to prevent the death.

### **The deceased's body**

In some cases where the deceased's body is at the scene—for example, with an unsuccessful resuscitation attempt or the discovery of a person who has died—the body not being handled properly has been an issue. This is ultimately under the purview of emergency medical services and law enforcement, but frontline service providers may benefit from the affirmation of a few basic principles:

- The body of a deceased person should be treated with dignity and respect.
- It should be handled gently and with solemnity.
- It should be shielded from public view.
- The deceased person's belongings should be properly accounted for.
- Family members' need to view the body and take part in its disposition should be accommodated.

\*Excerpted with permission from *Coping with Overdose Fatalities: Tools for Public Health Workers*, Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Addiction Services. Downloaded at [bit.ly/odfatalities](https://bit.ly/odfatalities).

\*\*For more information about The Pause, please see the description at [bit.ly/deathpause](https://bit.ly/deathpause) and view the short video by its creator, nurse Jonathan Bartels, at [bit.ly/pausebartels](https://bit.ly/pausebartels). Depending on your workplace environment, The Pause may be expanded to include making space for people to respond to the personal or emotional weight of what has happened, but that may be better left for a time beyond when the death is acknowledged.