

## Overdose Fatality Review

# Next-of-Kin Phone and Voicemail Guidelines



These guidelines were taken and adapted from the Utah Office of the Medical Examiner. This is a companion document to the resource *Next-of-Kin Interviews: A Practitioner's Guide to Implementation*. Next-of-kin (NOK) interviewers should use this sample as a guideline for developing their agencies' own guidelines for placing and receiving phone calls, setting up voicemail messages, and handling phone messages.

### Placing Outbound Phone Calls

- All outbound calls should be placed from a department-owned/-maintained phone number. Do not use a personal phone number or a Google Voice number to place calls.
- Whenever possible, cold calls should be placed so that the department's main number appears on the recipient's caller identification. The use of a department cell phone should be reserved only for text messages, placing outbound calls for scheduled interviews, or extreme circumstances.
- When the recipient answers your call, be sure to identify who you are (your name) and the agency from which you are calling, verify the identity of the recipient, and state your purpose in calling.
- Always document outbound calls as attempts in your call log, update the appropriate tracking sheet, and make a note of your calls in any additional tracking system required per department protocols.

### Receiving Inbound Calls

- When you answer an inbound call, be sure to identify who you are (your name) and the agency you represent, verify the caller's information, and ask the purpose of the call.
- If a front office staff member is routing a call, ask the staff member for more details, such as a case number, the caller's full name, or the decedent's name, so you can check the tracking sheets to ensure that the caller is an identified NOK.
- Always document incoming calls in your call log, update the appropriate tracking sheet, and note the incoming calls in any additional tracking system required per department protocols.
- If the caller is the identified NOK for a decedent and is willing to complete an interview, either schedule an NOK interview for a future date or complete an NOK interview as your schedule allows. Document relevant information in the tracking system per department protocols.

## Voice mail

- If you are responsible for setting up an outbound voicemail message, please use this template: "Hello. You have reached the voicemail of (your name) at (your agency). After the tone, please leave your full name and phone number and a time I may reach you. Thank you for calling."
- After listening to a voicemail message, delete the message and take the appropriate actions to resolve the matter (e.g., calling the person back or notating a simple "for your information" [FYI]).
- If an informant leaves a voicemail message for someone on the staff who is not working that day, call them back to complete the interview or schedule the interview for a later date.
- Should there be a voicemail message from someone who does not appear on the tracking sheets as the NOK, the staff member who listened to the voicemail message should return the call. If the voicemail message does

indeed belong to the identified NOK, you should schedule the interview for another time or day or complete the interview when calling the NOK back, depending on their preference. If the voicemail message is not for the NOK interviewer, follow up with an appropriate staff member; do not abandon messages.

- Voicemail messages must be notated on the appropriate tracking sheets.

## Taking Messages

- When taking a phone message, please collect the following information:
  - ◀ Caller's full name
  - ◀ Caller's phone number
  - ◀ Associated case number or decedent's name
  - ◀ Caller's relationship to decedent
  - ◀ Information we need to know before calling them back

Learn more about OFRs and next of kin at <https://www.ofrtools.org>.

Visit the Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP) Resource Center at [www.cossup.org](http://www.cossup.org).

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