

FY20-01 Springfield Technical Community College – Bereavement Policy

Policy Statement

Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) acknowledges the profound emotional and academic impact that the loss of a loved one can have on a student. We are committed to supporting students during these difficult times with compassion and flexibility. This policy provides a formal process for students to notify the college of a bereavement and to seek support during their time away.

Rather than setting a fixed leave period, STCC encourages students to take the time they need while remaining mindful of their academic responsibilities. In general, the college recommends up to five (5) weekdays of leave following the death of a loved one. Based on the student's individual needs, students may choose not to take these days consecutively. This timeframe balances the student's personal needs with the importance of maintaining academic progress. Students remain responsible for all missed coursework (in-class or online) and must make arrangements with their instructors upon return.

Part 1: Bereavement Leave Process

Students requesting bereavement leave should contact the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs. To initiate the process, students must utilize the [Student Absence Notification Report](#). The form will require the student to provide documentation of the death (e.g., obituary, death certificate, funeral program).

Once processed, the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs will notify the student's instructors and academic advisor of the bereavement leave. **It is then the student's responsibility to follow up with each instructor to arrange make-up work upon return.**

Students may also choose to withdraw from a course or the college entirely. STCC's Withdrawal, Leave of Absence, and Reinstatement policy outlines this process. Students must be aware of semester deadlines and complete the necessary withdrawal forms themselves. The student should also be aware of financial obligations for withdrawal. For more information, visit the [STCC Academic Policies webpage](#).

Part 2: Student Support and Mental Health Resources

Grieving can significantly affect a student's mental health. STCC offers access to the following support services:

Mental Health Counseling Services:

- **River Valley Counseling Center:** Available to STCC students with health insurance. Contact David Forton, MS, LMHC at 413-755-4332 or dcforton@stcc.edu for an initial referral session.
- **Uwill Student Mental Health and Wellness:** Free teletherapy service with no insurance required. Visit Uwill.com or contact 833-998-9455 / support@uwill.com.

Academic Support:

- The **Student Success Center** connects students with Success Coaches and tutors. Call 413-755-4715 for assistance.

Part 3: Academic Responsibility and Make-Up Work Expectations

STCC values academic freedom and recognizes that faculty have differing expectations for coursework and attendance. Students must communicate directly with each professor upon their return to discuss making up missed assignments. This communication should be done in a timely manner. Students should understand that any notification sent to faculty should not be considered to supersede any attendance requirements or expectations laid out in the course syllabus. It will be at the professor's discretion to excuse absences or class work, even with an absence notification from the office of the Vice President of Student Affairs.

Suggested Student Email Template

Subject: Bereavement Follow-up for [Course Name & Section]

Dear [Professor's Name],

I am writing to inform you that I experienced a loss in my family and notified the college on [Start Date]. I am now returning and would like to discuss how best to make up any missed coursework. Please let me know if there are specific deadlines or materials I should prioritize. Thank you for your understanding and support.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Student ID]

[Your Contact Information]

Part 4: Related Leave Policies

Bereavement leave may overlap with other leave or accommodation policies. The following additional policies may be relevant:

- **Pregnancy-Related Leave:** Covered under the Affirmative Action and Title IX policies. More details are available on the [STCC Affirmative Action Policy page](#).
- **Military Leave:** Applies to students on active duty or deployment. For support, contact the Veteran & Military Services Office (vet@stcc.edu).

Part 5: Questions

For more information or questions about this policy, please contact the **Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs**.

Student Support Standing Committee Recommendations

- *We recommend that when this policy is crafted, that a review be done to ensure that the policy is equitable for all students' reading levels.*
- *We recommend that the Student Absence Notification form be updated to include a section that allows for students to seek support or assistance in completing the form.*