

# Bereavement Policy Template

A section guide for employers writing their own bereavement leave policy. Suggested sections and content is provided. Under each one, cover the points listed – in your own words, with your own entitlements. This is not everything that a policy may need but a starting point. Note this does not substitute legal advice. Confirm current employment standards for every jurisdiction you hire in.

## Why is it important?

State why the organization offers bereavement leave.

### Cover:

- ✓ **The commitment.** That the company will support employees after a death, and that eligible people can take leave without worrying that their job is at risk.
- ✓ **Why work is part of this.** Grief does not stay outside work hours. It can affect concentration, memory, sleep, energy, and the usual pace of meetings and deadlines.
- ✓ **Why a written policy matters.** Employees can understand how they can be supported during this difficult time in their lives, and understand the general protocol during.



For more information, refer to: [Employer best practices](#) and [Bereavement leave in Canada](#).

## Program details.

Spell out what the leave actually includes.

### Cover:

- ✓ **When days may be used.** At the time of the death and later – for a funeral or memorial, travel, grief, and estate or administrative tasks.  
  
**Bereavement Leave.** In Canada, the minimum amount of bereavement leave depends on whether the workplace is federally regulated or falls under provincial or territorial law. Many employers go beyond the minimum by: offering more days of leave, paying more of that time, using a broader definition of family, including chosen family and close friends.
- ✓ **How days are counted.** Whether they are consecutive scheduled working days, and whether some days can be held back for a later service or appointment.
- ✓ **Unpaid time and the legal floor.** How to request extra unpaid days if applicable. That people who are not in the paid program can still use employment-standards leave. That if the statute is more generous than the policy, the statute wins.
- ✓ **What sits beside leave.** EAP or counselling, and any practical bereavement support.



For more information, refer to: [Employer best practices](#), [Bereavement leave in Canada](#), and [Types of grief](#).

## Request process.

Describe the path from loss to approved time away.

- 1. Notice.** Who to tell (leader and/or HR), that notice should come as soon as reasonably possible, and that written notice is preferred but a phone call is acceptable. Email is enough. A colleague or family member may give notice if the employee cannot. Only the fact of a death, a general relationship, and a rough duration are needed – not cause, location, or other personal detail.
- 2. Time entry and approval.** How leave is logged (system, code, remaining balance) and who approves. If the employee cannot log it themselves, the leader should. Pay, benefits, and paperwork should not require the employee to chase HR while they are away.
- 3. Supporting documents – if requested.** What counts as reasonable proof: a funeral-home notice, obituary, memorial program, or similar. An original death certificate is often not available in the first days and should not be demanded immediately. Never require proof that costs money the employee does not have or that is logistically impossible yet. Some jurisdictions (including federally regulated workplaces) need little more than written notice.



For more information, refer to: [What to say when telling work or school that someone has died](#), [Employer best practices](#) and [Bereavement leave in Canada](#).

## Paid Bereavement Leave: Eligibility.

State who is in the **paid company program**, as distinct from unpaid statutory leave.

### Cover:

- ✓ **Employment types.** Specify who is eligible based on employment type– for example regular full-time, regular part-time (paid only on scheduled days), term contracts, students and interns.
- ✓ **The statutory remainder.** Anyone marked “not eligible for paid company leave” may still have job-protected unpaid leave under employment standards, where the statute covers them.
- ✓ Do not leave eligibility as “employees.” Ambiguity here is what causes denials at the worst moment.



For more information, refer to: [Returning to work after a loss](#), and [Bereavement leave in Canada](#).

### Bereavement Leave

## Frequently asked questions.

Provide additional information that can be answered ahead of time. Here are some suggested prompts:

### Do the days have to be consecutive?

Say the usual pattern (often consecutive, within a reasonable window) and whether some days can be used later for a service, travel, or estate matter. Flexible timing is one of the supports that actually helps.

### What if they need more time than the policy gives?

Point to vacation, unpaid leave, medical or mental health leave, and a short phased return. Tell people to ask before paid days run out.

**What else is available besides days off?**

Name EAP / counselling, and any other programs available.

**What if the person who died is not on the statutory family list?**

Provincial lists differ. Some are broader (for example anyone living with the employee as family). Where the law does not cover the relationship, say whether the company will still consider leave – including chosen family – so disenfranchised losses are not automatically refused.

**Is email enough to start leave?**

Yes. A short written note is appropriate. A colleague can even send it.



For more information, refer to: [Employer best practices](#), [Returning to work after a loss](#), [Bereavement leave in Canada](#), [What to say when telling work](#), and [Types of grief](#).

**Sources**

1. [Employer best practices to support employees with bereavement leave and loss in Canada.](#)
1. [Bereavement leave in Canada: what to ask your employer right away.](#)
3. [What to say when telling work or school that someone has died: simple scripts and email templates.](#)
4. [Returning to work after a loss: a practical guide for employees.](#)
5. [The Different Types of Grief \(and which forms of support actually help\).](#)

*This information does not constitute legal advice.*