



NOLS Community Tragedy: A Message for Families

Dear NOLS Families,

We are contacting you today because you are an emergency contact for a student on a NOLS expedition course that is currently in progress. **Your student's course was not involved in a tragic incident that occurred this week. Their expedition is continuing as planned.**

We are deeply saddened to share that in the early evening of August 2, 2022, a 22-year-old student on a NOLS Outdoor Educator Course was struck by lightning while in camp in the Absaroka Mountains in Wyoming. The student went into cardiac arrest; course members responded immediately and performed CPR. In spite of those efforts, the student died at the scene. A second student was also injured by the strike. He was taken to the hospital but has been released and returned home. The other students and instructors on the course are safely out of the field and have been connected with loved ones and support. For more information on the incident, please [visit NOLS' website](#).

Please help us channel our resources into supporting directly affected students, families, and instructors by contacting us during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:00am-5:00pm MT) for non-emergent questions or concerns. We understand you may have questions about how NOLS is supporting your student and we hope that the information below is helpful to you.

We wish that we were able to communicate with you about this tragedy in a more personal fashion; we chose this format in order to get you the information as quickly as possible while we support the directly affected students, instructors, and families.

In service,

Kahla Gubanich

Expedition Admissions Director

Will my student hear this news?

Yes, we feel that it is important that our students in the field learn of this tragic event from their instructors and in the caring environment of their expedition. We are notifying them when we resupply them or at their course pick-up. Any course that calls in for another concern will also be notified.

What kind of support will my student receive when they hear this news?

Instructors have resources and training in psychological first aid to help students process and respond to this tragic news. All courses have emergency communication devices, and would contact program staff if they had students whose response was concerning or who needed support beyond what instructors are trained to provide. We will notify the emergency contacts of students who request additional support.

Can I talk to my student?

No, we do not have scheduled communication with expeditions once they are camping. All communication is initiated by instructors from the field when they need assistance.

What if my student wants to leave?

Instructors will work closely with students to process this news and help them find strength and solace in their expedition community. Instructors recognize and will honor that individuals may have a range of reactions. Students are encouraged to support one another by expressing what they need and by listening.

If there is a student who is not coping with the impact of this information and wishes to separate from the course, instructors would reach out to our program staff to understand what additional support might help them manage their stress. In this case, you would be notified.

What if I still have questions?

Please help us channel our resources into supporting directly affected students, families, and instructors by contacting us during regular business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:00am-5:00pm MT) at 800-710-6657 for non-emergent questions or concerns.