

# GRIEF & LOSS SUPPORT

## Resources for Early Childhood Programs

Grief is the natural, normal response to loss. It is made up of many different emotions ranging from sadness, anger, guilt, and everything in between. Supporting someone who is grieving isn't about having the perfect response. What people always remember is the presence and compassion of those around them.

### DEATHS OCCURRING IN THE FACILITY

- Take children to a different room, while designated staff implement the following procedures:
  - Immediately dial 911 to notify emergency medical personnel and law enforcement
  - Notify child's parent/guardian or adult's emergency contact
  - Notify the licensing agency
  - Follow all law enforcement protocols regarding the scene of the death

### DEATHS OCCURRING OUTSIDE THE FACILITY

- Provide age appropriate information
- Provide resources for support to children, parents/guardians, and staff
- Only release specific information about the circumstances of the child or adult's death that the authorities and family members of the deceased individual agree the facility may share

### DEATHS RELATED TO SUSPECTED INFECTIOUS DISEASE

- Families should notify the program within 24 hours of their child developing a known or suspected infectious disease
- For questions regarding a potentially infectious illness among enrolled children or staff members, contact your local or state public health department and your local Child Care Nurse Consultant
- Diseases can be reported to the 24/7 Iowa Disease Surveillance System hotline at 1-800-362-2736
- For a list of reportable diseases or for more information visit: <http://idph.iowa.gov/cade>

### CONFIDENTIALITY

- Respect the confidentiality of all information pertaining to the death
- Information shared should be selective and on a "need to know" basis
- Release only the information the authorities and family of the deceased individual have given the program permission to share

## GRIEF SUPPORT RESOURCES

- Amanda the Panda (EveryStep's Grief and Loss Services)
  - <https://www.everystep.org/services/grief-loss/about-amanda-the-panda>
  - (515)223-4847
- Academy of Grief and Loss at Hamiltons
  - <http://www.hamiltonsfuneralhome.com/academy/>
  - (515)697-3666
- Local Crisis Intervention office
- Child Care Nurse Consultant
  - <http://idph.iowa.gov/hcci/consultants>

## ONLINE RESOURCES

- Sesame Street in Communities: Helping Kids Grieve
  - <https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/to-pics/grief/>
- Eluna
  - <https://elunanetwork.org>
- Hamilton's Funeral Home Community Resource Booklet
  - <http://www.hamiltonsfuneralhome.com/support/upload/docs/June%202019%20CR%20Booklet.pdf>

## BOOKS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN

Always and Forever - Alan Durant  
Journey to Your Big Heart – Lori Rubin  
Always by my Side – Susan Kerner  
The Invisible String - Patrice Karst  
Missing My Best Friend – Norma Thorstad Knapp  
Lifetimes: A Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children - Bryan Mellonie/Robert Ingpen

## Activities for Children

Drawing feelings  
Feelings Journal  
Memory boxes  
Onsite grief support services (May not be available in all areas)  
Local Support Groups

# Helping Children Through the Grieving Process

## Answering Difficult Questions

- Reassure kids that you will answer their questions as best as you can
- Share basic, developmentally appropriate facts
  - Avoid uses terms such as "sleeping" or "passed away" as they may be confusing
  - Focus on death as a natural part of every life cycle. You may consider discussing that when a person dies, his body stops working. The heart stops beating and the body stops moving, eating, and breathing.
- You don't have to answer immediately. It's okay to respond with "Let me think for awhile about how to answer that question"
- Most importantly, it's okay to not have all the answers

## Reassurance and Comfort

- Children may be afraid that they are going to die or that it may happen to someone else close to them.
  - Provide reassurance by discussing that most people live a long time, and we can do lots of things to take care of our bodies to help us stay healthy.
- Remind them nothing they did caused the death or can reverse it and that it's not their fault
- Often young children are not capable of communicating their feelings. This can be frustrating and cause them to act out.
- Provide hugs or allow the child to have a comforting object
- Remind the child you are here to listen and help
  - Have patience and be prepared to recount the facts repeatedly

