



Dr. Lisa Caraway Oliver, EdD

Expert Witness in the Psychosocial Impact of Traumatic Loss

ACPE-Trained Chaplain | Adult Educator

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Profile

Expert in trauma, grief, and bereavement with a Doctorate in Adult Education and clinical experience in Level I trauma hospital settings. Specializes in the analysis and explanation of the psychological, relational, and existential impact of sudden and violent death on individuals and families.

Provides trauma-informed educational interviews, case analysis, and structured written opinions grounded in established grief and bereavement research, trauma theory, and family-systems frameworks. Work focuses on grief trajectories, indicators of complex and disrupted grief, and the impact of death on individual functioning, relational roles, family-system dynamics, identity, and long-term adjustment.

Regularly consults with attorneys and provides expert consultation and is available to offer testimony that translates complex grief and trauma responses into clear, structured, and defensible explanations for legal audiences. Maintains active engagement with interdisciplinary research in traumatic stress, bereavement science, and trauma psychology through affiliations with the Association for Death Education and Counseling, International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, and American Psychological Association Division 56 - Trauma Psychology.

Expert Witness Role

Expert Witness – Psychosocial Impact of Traumatic Loss

Provides expert education and interpretation regarding the psychological, relational, and existential impact of sudden and violent death on surviving individuals and families. Offers analysis grounded in established bereavement research, trauma-informed frameworks, and clinical chaplaincy experience, including the effects of homicide, accidental death, and other traumatic losses on grief processes, family systems, meaning-making, and long-term adjustment. Testimony focuses on explaining normative and disrupted grief responses following violent death for legal audiences.

Scope of Expert Testimony

Education regarding grief and bereavement following homicide, vehicular fatalities, and other violent or sudden deaths.

- Interpretation of trauma-informed grief responses without clinical diagnosis
- Analysis of family-systems disruption and secondary losses following death
- Explanation of meaning-making, identity disruption, and continuing bonds
- Clarification of common misconceptions about grief duration, "closure," and functional appearance
- Review of records, depositions, and survivor statements for consistency with established grief research

Core Expertise

Grief & Bereavement Analysis in Legal Contexts

Normative, traumatic, cumulative, and disrupted grief responses following sudden, violent, or accidental death, including homicide, vehicular fatalities, and medical injury.

Trauma-Informed Assessment & Interpretation

Analysis of grief responses informed by trauma theory, attachment frameworks, and bereavement research, without clinical diagnosis.

Family-Systems Impact of Death & Loss

Examination of relational disruption, secondary losses, role shifts, and long-term adjustment following traumatic death.

Death, Dying, & End-of-Life Education

Expertise in end-of-life decision pathways, advance-care planning, and distinctions between hospice and palliative care, grounded in clinical and educational practice.

Meaning-Making, Identity Disruption, & Continuing Bonds

Interpretation of existential, spiritual, and identity-related impacts of death and loss, including misconceptions about "closure" and functional appearance.

Cultural & Contextual Considerations in Grief

Grief expressions and expectations within Black families, immigrant communities, and multigenerational systems, with attention to cultural norms and systemic factors.

Psychoeducation for Legal Audiences

Translation of complex grief and bereavement concepts into clear, accessible explanations for juries, judges, and attorneys.

Education & Professional Formation

Doctor of Education (EdD), Adult Education

University of Georgia, Athens, GA

Dissertation: *How Do Caregivers Learn? Exploring the Informal Learning of Hospice Care Professionals*

Research Foci: Death and dying; Emotion work; Informal learning

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE)

Level I-B, II-A, II-B Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Arthur M. Blank Hospital

Level I-A Grady Health System, Atlanta, GA

About the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE): ACPE is the primary accrediting body for professional chaplaincy education in the United States. Its nationally recognized, graduate-level clinical formation model prepares chaplains and spiritual care providers for trauma-informed, ethically grounded, and culturally responsive engagement with individuals, families, and interdisciplinary teams navigating illness, crisis, grief, loss, and complex life transitions.

Professional Affiliations (Trauma & Bereavement Science)

- Association for Death Education and Counseling
- International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies
- American Psychological Association Division 56 - Trauma Psychology

Affiliations reflect ongoing engagement with interdisciplinary research and applied frameworks in traumatic stress, bereavement, and the human impact of sudden and violent death.

Professional Experience

Provide trauma-informed spiritual care and family-systems support during critical illness, life-threatening injury, and traumatic death in a Level I pediatric trauma hospital. Assess and respond to spiritual distress, anticipatory grief, meaning-making concerns, and relational disruption while collaborating with interdisciplinary teams to support families through acute medical crises and loss.

Clinical Chaplain Resident – Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Arthur M. Blank Hospital. (Level I Pediatric Trauma Hospital)

Provide trauma-informed spiritual care and family-systems support during critical illness, life-threatening injury, and traumatic death in a Level I pediatric trauma hospital. Assess and respond to spiritual distress, anticipatory grief, meaning-making concerns, and relational disruption while collaborating with interdisciplinary teams to support families through acute medical crises and loss.

Clinical Chaplain Intern – Grady Healthcare (Level I Adult Trauma Hospital)

Provided trauma-informed spiritual care, crisis intervention, and family support in a Level I adult trauma hospital. Accompanied patients and families through sudden injury, violent trauma, critical illness, end-of-life decision-making, and traumatic loss while collaborating with interdisciplinary teams during complex medical crises.

Educator & Program Developer

- Independent Educator & Facilitator, the Hospice Foundation of America and Pennsylvania State University "Let's Talk" program
- Community educator, Fulton, Gwinnett, and Fayette County Library Systems
- Guest Lecturer, Florida State University — Death & Dying: Not Only for People, Pets & Plants

Publications

Books

Oliver, L. C. (2022). *Final Wishes: A Workbook for Planning a Funeral* (2nd ed.). Dr. Lisa Oliver, LLC. ISBN-13: 978-0578366746 (ISBN-10: 0578366746)

Papers

Watkins, K. E., Ellinger, A. D., Suh, B., Brenes-Dawsey, J. C., & Oliver, L. C. (2022). *Further evolving the critical incident technique (CIT) by applying different contemporary approaches for analyzing qualitative data in CIT studies. European Journal of Training and Development*, 46(7–8), 709–726. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-07-2021-0107>.

Areas of Professional Consultation

- Wrongful Death
- Catastrophic Injury
- Pediatric Critical Illness and Death
- Family-System Disruption Following Loss
- Trauma and Bereavement
- End-of-Life Decision Making
- Meaning-Making and Adaptation Following Loss