



A RESOURCE  
FROM  
NACG  
MEMBERS



# Caregivers and Schools Working Together in Partnership After a Death

Part of Griefftalk Schools  
A Toolkit for Supporting Students who are Grieving



Endorsed by:

COALITION to SUPPORT  
GRIEVING STUDENTS

## Caregivers and Schools Working Together in Partnership After a Death

When your child goes back to school after the death of someone important in their life, it is critical for you to help the school understand how to best support your child during this time. Caregivers know their children best. It is the job of caregivers to help their children feel comfortable at school and empower teachers and other staff to create environments that will best suit the needs of their child. It is important that caregivers communicate with school staff concerning considerations that may be needed for their child. This may include anything from a bit of extra grace on difficult days to a request for the creation of an [Individual Bereavement Support Plan](#).



### Develop a Plan

#### **Who at the school do you want to share information with about the death?**

- Each child's support systems will look different. Together with your child think about who you each have a relationship with and feel comfortable asking for support. It may be a teacher, nurse, custodian, or lunchroom staff.
- There might also be people at the school who need to know this information, i.e. the school counselor or the school nurse.
- Think about the school personnel that you think would benefit your child if they knew your child's circumstances.
- Is there a need to let your child's class/peers know?
- Is there anyone else you would like to add to this list that is school related?

#### **What information do you want to share with your school community surrounding the circumstances of the death?**

- Together with your child develop a plan concerning what information needs to be shared.
- There may be some aspects of the death that your family chooses to keep private. Together decide how much information is appropriate.
- You may want to share information about rituals/traditions that are important to your family, including those related to death.
- Prepare your child to answer or not answer questions that they may be asked about the death. You may want to practice together so that they feel comfortable with what to share or how to decline answering questions they are not comfortable with.



### **When are you going to share this information?**

- Does your child want to be present when this information is shared, or would they prefer this to be shared before they return to school?
- There may be times when your child would prefer to not talk about the death, help give them the words to appropriately express that at school.
- Ask teachers to discuss how fellow students/class/school may be of support including participating in events related to the death.

### **Where can your child go for support?**

- Discuss with your child where they are comfortable at school to get support.
- Your child may need to go to a quiet place during the day when they need a break. This could be the counselor's office, a corner of the classroom, or another area within the school.

### **How can the school community best support your child moving forward?**

- Discuss with the school considerations that might help your child be successful and feel supported at school.
- Provide ideas on how the class/peers can reach out to support your child.
- Use the [Individual Bereavement Support Plan](#) to create a written, flexible plan to support your child upon return to class, for the remainder of the year and subsequent school years.
- Develop an ongoing communication plan: Identify best methods to communicate for the child to school, caregiver to school and school to caregiver.
- Remember that you have a voice. Work with your school to develop an appropriate and agreed upon plan.



If you feel like you need more information about children and grief or specific support on how grief relates to development ages, please review our [Developmental Understandings Guide here](#).



**As a caregiver you should:**

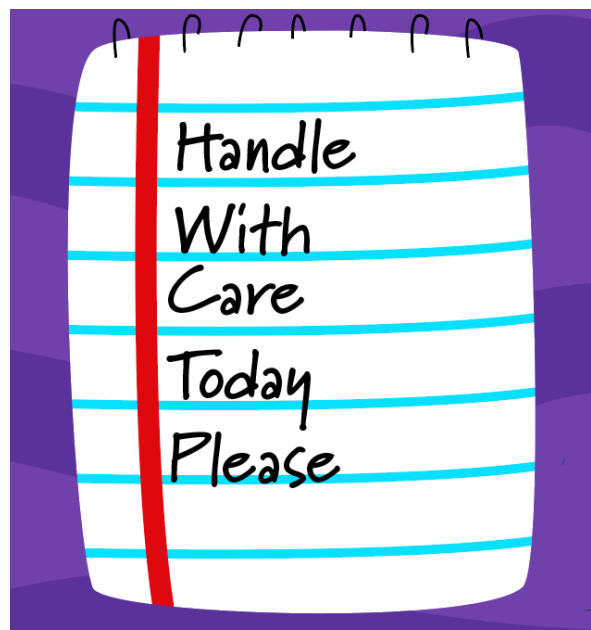
1. Be able to communicate with school personnel on issues affecting your child, including experiencing a death. This can include informing the school of special days or requesting excused absences related to grief support.
2. Know the school will recognize that experiencing a death may affect your child's school experience.
3. Be able to have your voice heard and acknowledged.
4. Know the school will be sensitive to and honor differences of students and families in expressing grief and honoring the dead. You may want to share information with teachers/school staff about rituals/traditions that are important to your family, including those related to death.

**Optional Activity:**

**Handle With Care**

This activity can be modified for caregivers to use with teachers (likely with younger children) or given to students to give to a teacher or other support personnel at school as a way to communicate when they are having a day when they need more support or attention.

1. Send a "Handle with Care" note to the teacher or other key staff members to alert them that your child may need special attention that day. This can be sent however you typically communicate with the teacher.
2. Continue to follow up with the teacher/staff to ensure that needs are being met and adjust needs as necessary.
3. Refer staff to [ChildrenGrieve.org](https://www.ChildrenGrieve.org) for additional tools and content.



**Inclusive Gender Statement:** In the context of this document, the use of the term “child(ren)” encompasses both boys and girls, as well as any other gender identity or gender expression that falls within the spectrum of childhood. This language choice is intended to promote inclusion and respect for the diversity of gender identities and non-binary genders.

**This document is part of NACG Griefftalk : A Toolkit for Supporting Students who are Grieving. Please visit [www.childrengrieve.org](http://www.childrengrieve.org) for additional free resources.**

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**NEW YORK LIFE  
FOUNDATION**

**The Caregiver Guide has been endorsed by the Coalition to Support Grieving Students.** The coalition is a unique collaboration of the leading professional organizations representing classroom teachers, principals, assistant principals, superintendents, school board members, and central office staff, student support personnel, and other school professionals who have come together with a common conviction: grieving students need the support and care of the school community.

The Coalition's purpose is to create and share a set of industry-endorsed resources that will empower school communities across America in the ongoing support of their grieving students and we are proud to have this resource endorsed by this group.



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