

Supporting Children and Families who are Grieving: Tools and Resources for Community Behavioral Health Centers

Presenter:

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Agenda

Welcome & Learning Objectives

Prevalence

Guiding Principles around Grief

Compounded Losses

Developmental Lens

School-Based Grief Support Strategies

Q&A



Who We Are

The Children's Room is an independent bereavement nonprofit supporting children, teens, and families who are grieving.

We provide grief support for families with children (ages 3.6 –18) who have experienced the death of a parent or sibling. Our programs are available free of charge at our Arlington center, virtually, and in schools and community agencies across Eastern Massachusetts.

We also offer education and training for professionals from schools and healthcare providers.

Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model

Massachusetts Projected Results 2024



Childhood bereavement is a critical issue and an increasingly important national priority. The Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model (CBEM)¹ approximates rates of U.S. children and youth who will experience the death of a parent or sibling by the time they reach adulthood. Results from the CBEM are updated annually using national, state, and regional vital statistics.² This report uses data from 2018 to 2022, the five most recent years of data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

1 in 13

children in Massachusetts **will experience** the death of a **parent or sibling** by age 18



40TH

CBEM
RANKING BY
STATE¹

7.6% ~ 102K

children **will be** bereaved by age 18
LOWER than national rate of **8.6%**

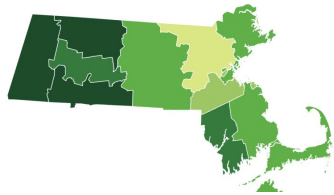


& MORE THAN
DOUBLES

269K

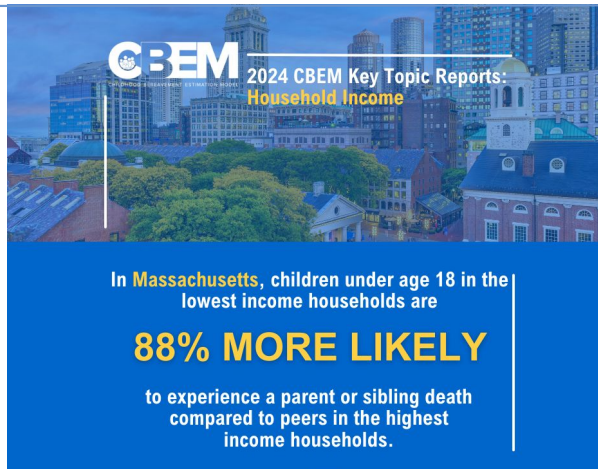
youth **will be** bereaved by age 25

Socioeconomic Status as a Predictive Variable



Income Groups and CBEM Results

Income	Bereavement
\$66,620 - \$72,380	10.5% or 1 in 10
\$72,381 - \$86,850	9.4% or 1 in 11
\$86,851 - \$106,160	8.0% or 1 in 12
\$106,161 - \$120,630	5.8% or 1 in 17
\$120,631 - \$135,590	5.6% or 1 in 18



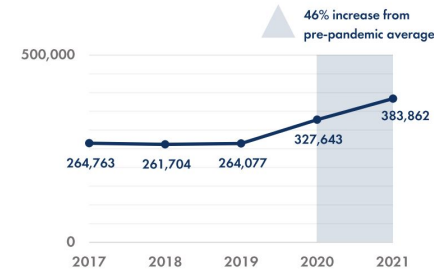
Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model. Judi's House. (2022, October 26). <https://judishouse.org/research-tools/cbem/>



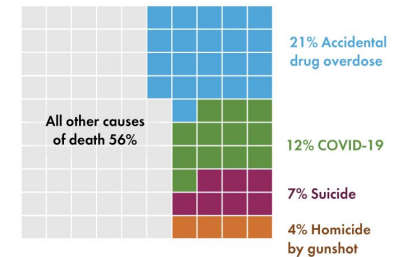
Incidence of Childhood Grief due to Stigmatized Deaths



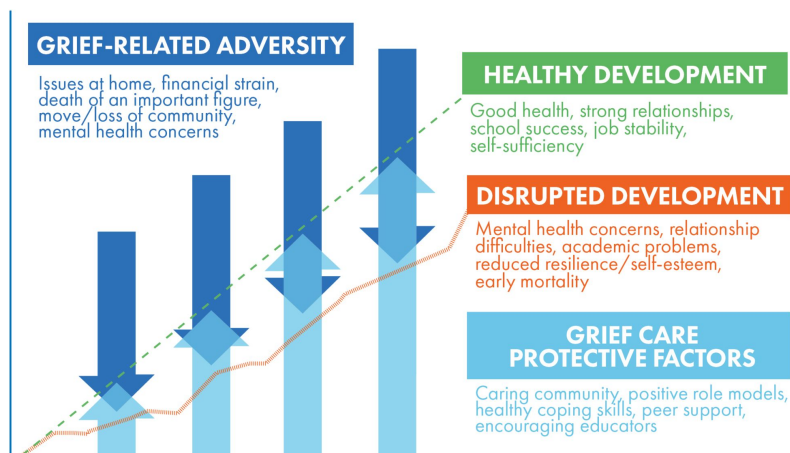
CBEM Snapshot results highlight an overall increase of 120,300 children bereaved in 2021 compared to pre-pandemic numbers.



2021 Landscape of childhood bereavement due to a parent's death by cause.



The Benefits of Grief-Informed Care



Graph adapted from: Harvard University Center on the Developing Child



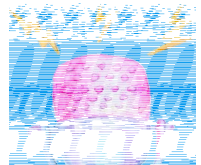
Teen Voices: Let's hear from them!

YouTube Film: "Grief Out Loud: Teens Talk About Loss"

Created by Hospice of the Chesapeake & Funded by Transmerica

Filmed in 2016 at a camp for grieving teens

- "Grief is..."
- "How does your grief affect you?"
- "What do you wish people understood about how you feel?"





Guiding Principles Around Grief

- Grief is universal
- Grief is unique - it is not one size fits all
- Grief is a natural and normal response to loss
- Grief doesn't end - it is ongoing
- Grief is cyclical
- We grow around our grief, we don't "get over" it
- Grief can be transformative

Grief is layered with compounded losses.

- A death loss can be experienced alongside other losses; these can be multiple, layered, ambiguous losses.
- Be open to **acknowledging the losses** and leave space for people to talk about the impact - when they are ready.

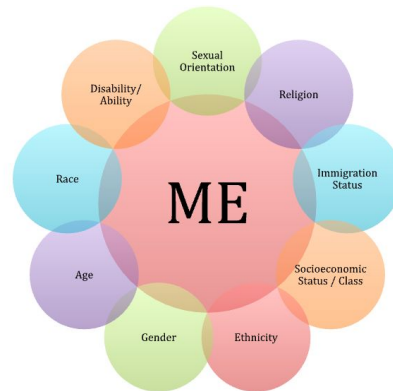


Image credit to www.missingpiecesgrief.org

Dimensions of Diversity

Your culture and identity impacts:

- Your **experience** of grief
- How you **express** your grief
- What you view as "socially acceptable" **ways to grieve**
- What you perceive your **supports** to be



Grief Through a Developmental Lens

A child's understanding and ways of coping with a death loss will be impacted by their cognitive and psychosocial development.

A child's or teen's grief is cyclical.

It's healthy and normal for children to "re-grieve" at different developmental stages over the course of their lives.



Grief: What Does It Look Like?

Acting Out



Self-isolation or withdrawal

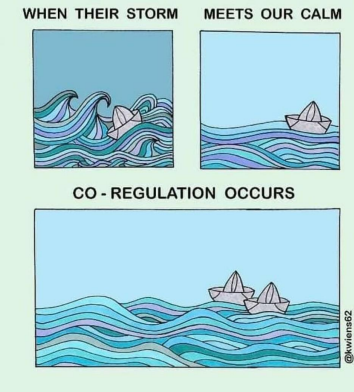


Overachieving & hyper-focused



Supporting a Student After a Loss

- Communicate before the student's return
 - Point person
 - Clear communication plan
- Co-create a plan for support
 - Reach out to the parent / guardian
 - Involve the student
 - Offer options
 - Communicate plans with educators
- Be flexible with the student
 - Person to check in with; Space to take a break
 - Signals if needing a break
- Empower the student to speak up for their needs
- Share resources and referrals to local supports



The Rights of a Student who is Grieving

I have the right to grieve in my own time, in my own way.

As I grow, my needs and wants may change.

I have the right to collaborate and design my grief support plan with school staff that understands.

This would include me having a school staff support person identified in my grief plan and a safe place to go in school when needed.

I have the right to have my school community respect my need to express my grief.

My grief expressions may come at various times throughout the school day and I may express myself in different ways as long as it does not hurt myself or others.

I have the right to give and get support with other students at my school.

It is important for me to have an opportunity to connect with other students including others who are grieving.

I have the right to share or not share about my grief.

I have the right to ask what I share be held in confidence unless I say otherwise.

I have the right to ask for support and not to be identified by my loss.

I will be viewed as a student and not be identified solely by my grief. I am more than my grief.

I have the right to flexibility with deadlines to help me stay on track with my academic performance.

My grief may necessitate adjustments to expectations with due dates.

I have the right to choose my level of participation in events that may affect my grief.

I have permission to not attend or participate in special events, activities, or conversations that make me uncomfortable.



TCR GRIEF SUPPORT SERVICES

Information & Referral

- Resources & Referrals (email)
- Intake with parent/guardian (phone)
- Adult Consultation (phone)

Center-Based Services: Located in Arlington, MA

- Family Peer Support Groups (ages 3.5-18 & adults)
- Teens-Only Group (8th-12th grade)
- Teen Program Social Events (8th-12th grade)

Virtual Services

- Parenting While Grieving series (adults)
- Family Night (kids, adults, extended families)



TCR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES

Grief Peer Support Groups (1st – 12th grades)

Grief Awareness Events (K – 12th grades)

“Pathways of Change” SEL Program (2nd – 3rd grades)

Professional Development

Professional Consultations



Other supports and how to find them



Rick's Place | Grief support for children, teens, and their families

Visit our website www.childrensroom.org



Thank You!

Evaluation & Questions

info@childrensroom.org

To refer families or contact us

Visit our website www.childrensroom.org