Individual Bereavement Support Plan

Endorsed by:
Coalition to Support Grieving Students
Individual Bereavement Support Plan

This document is a resource for supporting students returning to school after they have experienced the death of a significant person in their lives. When a student returns to school, they may feel alone and challenged by the task of engaging with their daily routine. Schools are in a unique position to provide support for students with thoughtful plans specific to the individual’s needs. Students grieve developmentally, and their needs are unique and changing throughout the days, months, and years ahead. Those students that need and receive grief support have improved outcomes socially, emotionally, and academically.

As much as possible the child should be included in discussions and decision-making relating to their Individual Student Bereavement Plan.

Considerations for Strengths

A student’s interpersonal strengths and personal network of family and friends will contribute to responsive support during the grieving process. These factors are helpful to note when developing an Individual Bereavement Support Plan.

- Hopeful Attitude
- Personal Resilience
- Ability to Maintain Daily Routine
- Sense of Meaning and Purpose
- Sense of Wellbeing
- Satisfaction with End-of-Life Care Received by Deceased
- Involvement in Meaningful Activities
- Ability to Express Feelings, Including Crying
- Feels Support from Family and Friends
- Grief Support in Place
- Mental Health Support in Place
- Other:
Considerations for Risk

Students may respond to death cognitively, socially, emotionally, and/or physically. Considering risk involves looking at factors that can cause grief reactions to be more severe. Use school district policy for guidance on addressing risk.

- Limited social support
- Sudden and/or unexpected death
- Had shared classes or extracurricular activities
- Had a recent relationship with deceased
- Active social, emotional, or academic stressors
- Changes in social, emotional, or academic behaviors
- Difficulty coping with past or present stressors
- Multiple deaths experienced
- Multiple secondary losses (Divorce, incarceration, foster care)
- Distant and/or conflicted relationship with deceased
- Current or past history of substance abuse
- Current or past history of mental illness
- Current or past history of self-harm
- Suicidal ideation or previous suicide attempts
- Guilt and/or confusion about death or care provided before the death
- Other:

Potential supporting strategies

Possible strategies to consider when developing accommodations for the student:

Environmental Strategies
- Seat student near the teacher
- Seat student near the door – implement signal in case a break is needed
- Uphold classroom routine, structure, and expectations
- Consider all the locations that the student may need support and identify strategies for each (eg: cafeteria, recess, transportation etc.)

Lesson Presentation Strategies
- Check-in for understanding/review
- Test-Taking Strategies
- Allow extra time for the exam

Assignment Strategies
- Give extra time to complete assignments
- Provide tutor/peer assistance
- Implement flexibility as needed
- Clarify prioritization within assignments
- Be aware of assignments that involve death and adjust as needed

Support Staff Strategies
- Provide local grief support resources
Behavioral Strategies
• Keep classroom rules simple, visible, and clear

Break Strategies
• Utilize non-verbal signals or code words for teacher-student communication to indicate the need for a break
• Allow student open pass for counselor/social worker/nurse for support

School/Classroom Events
• Provide choice for participation or an alternative option in special projects or holiday activities that may remind the student who is grieving of their loved one (e.g., Mother’s Day, Father’s Day)
• Use inclusive language (e.g., caregiver or grown-up instead of parent, mom, or dad)

Consider expanding the definition of a family or loved one to acknowledge the diverse range of family compositions and to better represent those significant to the bereaved.
## Individual Student Bereavement Plan

**Form Created By:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Guardian</th>
<th>School staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other:</th>
<th>Other:</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Once completed, share a copy with:

- [ ] Family. Please list:
- [ ] Teacher(s). Please list:
- [ ] Student’s support services file maintained by the student’s school counselor, mental health staff or nurse.

Others who the plan may be shared with:

> In working together to create this plan we agree to treat as confidential all information shared outside of those listed above.

It is recommended that this plan is updated with each school transition, additional death, or annually as needed.

**Date Updated:**

**Student Support Services File Updated:**

**School Support Team Members Updated:**
**Individual Student Bereavement Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student name:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of Student Support Team:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School-based supports in place at the time of death:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary family contact regarding the death:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of person who died:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to student:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of death:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cause of death:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural or religious considerations:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant dates to consider (future end-of-life ceremonies, deceased person’s birthday, special occasions, …):</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other details that are helpful for school staff to know and family has given permission to share: (use additional paper as needed)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
## Individual Student Bereavement Plan

### Plan / Interventions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short Term:</th>
<th>Long Term:</th>
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Accommodations and/or modifications for student, family and school staff to consider and discuss: (use additional paper as needed)
Please note that the Individual Bereavement Support Plan is a) not a legally binding document; or b) not associated in any way with special education (IEP) or 504 accommodation plans. Individualized bereavement plans can be designed, used, and adapted for any student to support coordination with the caregiver and relevant educators that work with the student.

This document is part of NACG Grieftalk: A Toolkit for Supporting Students who are Grieving. Please visit www.childrengrieve for other tools to support your work with students who are grieving.

Thank you to the following NACG members who contributed to this resource: (listed alphabetically by last name.)

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The Individual Bereavement Support Plan 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.

Lead Founding Members

Founding Members