

SESSION & SPEAKER OVERVIEW

Session 1: **Meeting the Needs of Children, Teens, and Adults who are Grieving: 12 "Take-aways" from 35 years in Bereavement Work**

Donna Schuurman, EdD, FT

This session will present a dozen "lessons learned" through her work at Dougy Center, bearing witness to the lived experience of children as young as 3, up through teens, young adults, and their parents or adult caregivers grieving the death of a family member or friend. Weaving examples from clinical practice, practice-based evidence, and research into practical "take-aways", the material is relevant to anyone wanting to better understand and support those who are grieving.

Objectives

By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Discuss the long-term effects of early childhood bereavement
- Analyze the impacts of language on people who are grieving
- Evaluate the implications of framing grief as a mental disorder



Donna L. Schuurman, EdD, FT, is Sr. Director of Advocacy & Training at Dougy Center: The National Grief Center for Children & Families in Portland, Oregon, where she has served in various roles since 1986 including 25 years as Executive Director. She writes and trains internationally on bereavement issues, and has authored numerous articles, book chapters, and the book, *Never the Same: Coming to Terms with the Death of a Parent*. Dr. Schuurman served as President of the Board of Directors for the Association for Death Education & Counseling and received their Annual Service Award in 2003 and their Clinical Practice Award in 2013. She is a member of the International Work Group on Death, Dying, and Bereavement and a founding board member of the National Alliance for Grieving Children. She has been invited to assist communities following tragic school shootings as well as natural disasters; is regularly sought out by national media for interviews related to understanding and supporting children, teens, and adults when someone in their life dies; and provides expert witness testimony in wrongful death legal cases.

Session 2: Childhood Bereavement Prevalence: The Story Behind the Numbers

Michaeleen (Micki) Burns, PhD, LP, Clinical Director, Judi's House

Preliminary data from the 2022 Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model (CBEM) indicates 7.7% of U.S. youth—more than 5.6 million—will experience the death of a sibling or parent by age 18 - an astounding increase driven by pandemic related losses. Research demonstrates the death of a significant attachment figure places children at increased risk for emotional, relational, behavioral, and academic problems, as well as earlier mortality. Unaddressed childhood bereavement can contribute to a litany of adverse outcomes as youth move along the developmental continuum. In contrast, protective factors including positive role models, healthy coping skills, peer support, and encouraging educators and caring adults can provide the scaffolding bereaved youth need to heal. Exploring bereavement prevalence at the local and regional levels supports strategic resource allocation to ensure no child is alone in grief.

By highlighting disparities based on social factors, this presentation provides information to increase understanding and awareness of bereavement nationally and regionally. For example, CBEM results indicate the rates of bereavement for Black/African American youth in the U.S. are nearly two times the national average. State and local findings will also be explored. Participants will be challenged to consider systemic and structural barriers that may prevent individuals from overrepresented bereaved groups from receiving the culturally competent comprehensive grief care they require. The data support a call to action for communities to create supportive spaces that address diverse needs and foster whole-family, whole-community, preventative, strengths-based approaches to bereavement care. By promoting trauma- and grief-aware communities, we can help mitigate the risks of unaddressed childhood grief and develop systems of care that provide education, resources, peer connection, and interventions. Dedicated communities can cultivate an environment that recognizes and centers the needs of the most vulnerable and potentially overlooked bereaved children.

Objectives:

At the completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Explain how the pandemic is influencing childhood bereavement prevalence trends
- Quantify national differences in U.S. childhood bereavement rates based on race and Hispanic origin
- Locate state information on childhood bereavement rates, including differences based on race and Hispanic origin
- Hypothesize how systemic and structural disparities contribute to prevalence differences
- Explore what barriers must be overcome to ensure equal access to comprehensive grief care



Michaeleen (Micki) Burns, PhD, is the Chief Clinical Officer at Judi's House and JAG Institute (JH/JAG) and adjunct faculty at the University of Colorado. JH/JAG is a comprehensive family bereavement center in Denver. A Licensed Psychologist with more than two decades of experience providing therapeutic assessment and support to families facing adversity, Micki has witnessed the lasting impact of unaddressed grief. She is dedicated to ensuring appropriate care is available for all and raising childhood bereavement to a level of critical public importance. At JH/JAG, she oversees the direct service, research, and training departments working towards a vision where no child is alone in grief.

Session 3: Centering Culture and Equity in Youth Bereavement and Grief Support

Tashel Bordere, PhD, CT

This session addresses culture and inequities in loss and service provision to youth and families occupying marginalized identity statuses. Drawing from research and case examples, the presentation describes ways in which loss and grief processes are uniquely complicated for socially disadvantaged youth and often involves patterns of suffocated grief (Bordere, 2011, 2016, 2019). Participants will learn about culturally conscientious and responsive strategies and practices with youth and families.

Objectives:

By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Describe the roles of culture, identity, and inequities in outreach and service provision to youth and families from underrepresented backgrounds
- Delineate factors associated with the Covid-19 pandemic that have implications for outreach and patterns of suffocated grief
- Explicate and apply culturally responsive and culturally conscientious practices



Tashel C. Bordere, PhD, CT, is an Assistant Professor of Human Development and Family Studies and State Extension Specialist in Youth Development at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She has developed and taught courses in Death, Dying, and Bereavement, Black Families, Adolescent Development, and Parent-Child Interaction. She is the past editor of *The Forum*: a quarterly publication of the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC). She has served on the ADEC Board of Directors, as past Chair of the People of Color/Multicultural Committee and is a member of the National Alliance for Grieving Children, Society for Research in Child Development, and the National Council on Family Relations. Dr. Bordere is a speaker, youth and family social justice advocate, researcher, and author of works relating to diversity and resilience through loss and grief, including *Adolescents and Homicide* and "The remedy is NOT working": Seeking socially just and culturally conscientious practices in bereavement, a co-authored work, in *Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society*. She is a Certified Thanatologist (Death, Dying, and Grief Education).