

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN



ADMISSION AWARENESS FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN

THE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Do you know that one in fourteen children experience the death of a parent or sibling? In a high school of 1000 students, this means that roughly 70 students could be carrying such a loss. These teenagers, Grieving Children, as referred to by national bereavement and grief organizations, are often an invisible population in our schools and colleges. As school counselors and admission officers helping students navigate the transition from high school to college, we can do more for these students.

The Admission Awareness for Grieving Children Campaign has been established to foster more awareness and support for students who are uncertain about navigating the college process due to a family death. It is about both giving Grieving Children the opportunity to explain their circumstances as part of the college process and ensuring that college-bound students are made aware of grief resources on or near the college campuses to which they apply and enroll.

In our college counseling and classroom work, we have worked with dozens of Grieving Children who have benefited from additional support and guidance. This work is important to us and we hope it is to you, too. Join us in this campaign!



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FAMILY DEATH AWARENESS FACTS

1 in 14 children experience the death of a parent or sibling by the age of 18.

Childhood and youth bereavement is a critical public health issue.

A family death results in many challenges. It can make applying to college FEEL insurmountable.

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“Loss impacts the students in their studies and activities, no matter when they experienced the loss. The family death forces students to take on more responsibility (I helped with tax preparations), at a younger age. Also, if students talk about the loss in an essay, it takes a lot of courage to do so and admission officers should respect that.”

MAGGIE J.

“After my mom’s death in my senior year, I had a really hard time focusing in class and keeping up with everything. My mom had been sick a long time, in fact, it seemed like she had been sick my whole life. My mom was a single parent so when she died, I had to look to my two older siblings for all support.”

DAISY O.

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GRIEF & THE COLLEGE PROCESS

How can Grieving Children be better supported in the admission process?

- Understand that a family death impacts many parts of a student’s college process, even if the student doesn’t come right out and say so. Know that students might be conflicted writing about a family death in their application essays. They worry how their experiences will be perceived by admission officers.
- Find ways to give Grieving Children an opportunity to explain difficult circumstances. For example, an admission interviewer might ask after learning about a death, “If you are comfortable, can you tell me what changed for you after your sister died?” The student might reply that “Everything changed,” as well as offering specific details about how it resulted in new responsibilities. Asking a student, “What changed?” is an important question. The answer will result in a more accurate portrait of the admission candidate.
- Encourage applicants to update their information, even if, at a later date, they want to add some additional details regarding their family circumstances.
- Be patient with Grieving Children. They may be juggling many demands and many new emotions.

GRIEVING IN SCHOOL

What grieving students might experience:

- Grief and mourning are circular.
- Grief and mourning last much longer than expected.
- Grief and mourning require dealing with a lot of responsibilities outside of studies, extracurriculars, and work.
- A death of a parent or a sibling frequently results in additional financial, emotional, and familial burdens.

BE AN ADVOCATE. GRIEVING CHILDREN NEED OUR SUPPORT!

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“I wish admission officers would notice that we are not trying to get “pity points” or make them feel bad for what we went through. The application essay prompts us to write about a moment that changed us. I decided not to write about my deceased brother because I didn’t want admission officers feeling bad for me. I didn’t mention my brother unless there was a supplemental essay. I wish I had.”

KYLE B.

“Applying for financial aid was really complicated. How do I explain that funeral costs consumed family resources? How do I categorize life insurance, medical bills, disability checks, and donations from the community? Much of sorting through this process was my responsibility alone.”

NATALIE M.

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YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Be familiar with grief signs. Pay attention to indications of loss in personal essays, school reports, and interviews.
- Be clear with students that it’s okay to take some time to make sense of everything, even if that means a gap year.
- Know your campus mental health and grief support resources.
- Create a Grieving Children (GC) applicant category so that admission readers are aware of important family circumstances. Find ways to support Grieving Children as they transition from applicants to enrolled students.

NEXT STEPS

Additional Recommendations for Those Involved in the Admission Process

- Encourage school counselors and admission officers to examine school and college admission practices regarding communication with and support for Grieving Children.
- Become advocates for practices that will better serve students who have experienced a family death.
- Consider joining the Coalition to Support Grieving Children. The Coalition provides valuable resources that empower school communities in the ongoing support of Grieving Children.
- Promote professional development training for all admission professionals regarding childhood and youth bereavement.



WHY THIS MATTERS

With grieving children in attendance at all our schools and colleges, it is important that school counselors and admission officers understand the number of children impacted and how to unite in supporting students. The Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model provides state and national data on childhood bereavement. Research shows that grieving children need a supportive peer group as well as the care of compassionate educators. These are protective and essential factors in promoting healthy growth.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CHECK OUT THESE HELPFUL RESOURCES OR CONTACT US!

National Alliance for Grieving Children

childrengrieve.org

Coalition to Support Grieving Children

grievingstudents.org

National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement

schoolcrisiscenter.org

New York Life Foundation Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative

Newyorklifefoundation.org/bereavement

Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model

judishouse.org

The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children and Families

dougy.org

Actively Moving Forward (AMF): Connecting and Empowering Grieving College Students

healgrief.org

Road to Resilience: Memories that Move us Forward

StoryCorps.org



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FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN**

HELPFUL RESOURCES