

Empowering Pediatric Health Professionals

10 AAP Recommendations to Help Grieving Families After the Death of a Child

As a pediatrician, you dedicate yourself to the care of babies, children, and teens. When one of your patients dies, their family and loved ones are still here and deserve caring, compassionate support when dealing with their traumatic loss.



Here's How You Can Better Support Your Grieving Patients

- 1 Take time to listen** to grieving parents and families and provide compassionate support.
- 2 Determine each family's unique needs**, which will be based on the structure of the family and their feelings about death and dying.
- 3 Identify the family's cultural and religious traditions** around death so you can support them from a place of understanding.
- 4 Consider learning more about cultural humility, sensitivity, and implicit bias** to address any views that might cloud your understanding of what the family needs.
- 5 Realize that you must fully acknowledge the child's death to help the family heal.** Visit children who are sick or hurt and approaching death and talk with their families. After a child dies, reach out to parents and caregivers to see how they're doing and offer support.
- 6 Find out how you can support the child's siblings**, especially if they are your patients.
- 7 Explore and share key resources** like community or online grief groups that can help parents, siblings and other family members and share these details with the family.
- 8 Seek out specialized resources.** Families may struggle even more when crib death, a car crash, a shooting, drug overdose, suicide or other sudden event claims the life of a beloved child. Find resources that speak to these situations.
- 9 Offer to help family members find counseling or therapy** to help them cope, regardless of how the child died.
- 10 Keep in mind that grief may continue for a long time.** Let the family know this is perfectly all right. There is no timetable that's right and no magic cure for the pain. Emphasize that, little by little, life will take on a new rhythm and meaning for them. Remind them you'll be there for them each step of the way.

Build Your Loss & Grief Support Toolbox

Read the full 2023 AAP clinical report to learn more about:

Incidence of Pediatric Death | Grief & Bereavement | Survivor Consideration | Culture & Community Considerations | Pediatric Roles in Grief