

Dept. of Health Services: Office of Children's Mental Health focuses on supporting child well-being through Covid-19 grief

Posted on Tuesday, Feb 8, 2022

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Office of Children's Mental Health Director Linda Hall today announces the publication of a new fact sheet [Supporting Child Well-Being through COVID-19 Grief](#) detailing what our parents, schools, communities, and policymakers can do to make a difference.

From deaths of loved ones to loss of rituals and routines, children and youth have experienced many types of loss during the pandemic. Attending to a young person's grief helps them heal and become healthier and more resilient moving forward.

- Nearly all children have experienced some form of grief or loss during the pandemic, such as: loss of routine, rituals, social connections, and a sense of physical or economic safety.
- Approximately 1,000 Wisconsin children lost a parent or caretaking grandparent, fortunately one of the lowest rates of orphanhood in the nation.
- Most of the Wisconsin children who lost a caregiver are White (60%), because most of Wisconsin's children are White. However, Wisconsin's children of color are 1 1/2 to 5 times more likely to have lost a caregiver.
- Research from other pandemics and disasters shows that even children who do not experience a close death may become overwhelmed if they have unaddressed feelings of powerlessness, social stigma, and disconnection.
- It's important for adults to recognize signs of distress in children and young adults.
- Experiences of grief and/or trauma don't always look like sadness. They can

also look like inattentiveness, acting out, physical symptoms like stomach aches, or refusal to go to places or engage in activities that trigger the grief.

What We Can Do

Parents

- Talk about the loss. Listen to your child and let them talk about their feelings. Validate their experiences. Help them feel calm.
- Use routines to help establish a sense of normalcy.

Schools

- Educate staff about child and adolescent grief.
- Support teachers' well-being so that they have the ability to support students.

Communities

- Provide spaces and rituals for bereaved families to gather, and for others to support them.
- Create opportunities for youth to interact with other supportive adults in the community who can get to know them and provide a listening ear.

Policymakers

- Expand mental health resources through support for telehealth, student services professionals in schools, and school-based social emotional learning and mental health programming
- Create spaces and opportunities for families to remain connected during incarceration of emerging adults.

See the [complete fact sheet](#).

See [previous fact sheets](#).