

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

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Issue 19-21

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UPDATE TO FYI 11-06, ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WHEN THERE IS A LOSS THROUGH DEATH

DCFS, through the efforts and activities of a previous Workgroup on Grief, Mourning and Loss, implemented Practice Guidelines and other information/tools to promote use of effective interventions at the time of a loss through death. The goal of the effort was that through using the Practice Guidelines and accessing other information/tools, including resources and training opportunities, the knowledge and skills of Children's Social Workers and their supervisors would be enhanced, resulting in a responsive service delivery to children and families. In addition, useful information/tools were provided to address the needs of staff whom require extra support at the time that they experience a loss through death, whether it be a child or his/her family member.

This DCFS FYI Bulletin provides an update of the tools and resources that were in previous DCFS FYI Bulletin FYI 11-06, Addressing the Needs of Children and Families When There is a Loss Through Death. Current tools and resources are highlighted in this Bulletin.

The Practice Guidelines do not eliminate the requirement to seek review and use of existing Departmental policies and procedures where relevant and do not disregard the importance of utilizing supervision.

I. Attending Funerals/Services:

Conduct a careful and thoughtful assessment in consultation with a SCSW and/or Manager to determine the appropriateness of attending a client's funeral/services. When doing so, one should focus on supporting the family, out-of-home caregiver/provider, and consider the following:

- CSWs are not required to attend funerals.
- DCFS staff should be mindful of the situation, including the circumstances of the death.
- When dealing with a family that has recently lost a child, emotions can be particularly raw. The SCSW should be prepared to become more deeply involved with the management of the case, if needed.



If you have any questions regarding this release please e-mail your question to:

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II. Funeral Planning:

[Guidelines for Funeral Planning](#)

III. Supporting the Family/Child(ren):

Staff must recognize that each situation is unique and that providing support to a family during times of crisis cannot be done in isolation, as staff must consider support for oneself while doing the following:

- Consider the family's needs, wishes and religious beliefs.
- Consider relationships to the child(ren) when determining who should inform the child(ren) of a death.
- Prepare the caregiver to give support to a grieving child.
- Utilize resources on grief, mourning, and loss.
- Access the [DCFS Funeral, Burial, and Cremation Costs policy](#)
- [Assess the Safety and Mental Health Needs of Siblings After A Child's Suicide](#)
- Prepare the surviving sibling(s) (in circumstances where a sibling has died) or child (in circumstances where a parent/caregiver/other close relative or family member has died) for the funeral.
 - [Explaining Death to Children](#)
 - [Developmental Stages in Understanding Death](#)
- Help the family to plan for the surviving child(ren)'s attendance at the funeral, if desired by the child(ren).
- Consideration of the family/child's cultural issues is important.
- Memorabilia/mementos should be collected when determined appropriate.

IV. Resources:

- Service Linkage Specialists in DCFS Regional Offices are available to provide CSWs with information on grief and loss.
- [Sesame Street Helping Children Grieve](#)
- Resources for counseling and therapeutic services include the following:
 - [Grief and Loss Resources](#)
 - DMH co-located clinicians in DCFS regional offices for referrals for mental health services for grieving children; Completion of the Mental Health Screening Tool on the [DCFS Referral Portal](#) is a first step
 - LA County Info Line (for referrals) – Dial 2-1-1
 - [Grief and Loss Bibliography](#)

V. Taking Care of Oneself/Self-Care:

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- For Occupational Exposures to Potentially Traumatizing Events (PTEs)

Since August 2017, the DCFS Peer Support Program has provided Psychological First Aide (PFA) interventions to DCFS employees with direct and indirect PTE exposures. The DCFS Chief of Psychological Services through its Program Manager triages all Child Fatality, Near Fatality, Security Incident Reports as well as all word-of-mouth referrals.

The DCFS Peer Support Program is entirely voluntary and each DCFS employee's right to self-determination is respected. When a DCFS employee requests peer support, a fully trained Peer Supporter (at level of CSW III or higher) will be assigned. The assigned Peer Supporter will come from a neighboring regional office in order to assure confidentiality and will meet with the DCFS employee at his/her convenience. A best effort is made to match the employee with a Peer Supporter with similar experience (i.e. child fatality, assault, death threat, etc.). These initial Psych First Aide (PFA) interventions are scheduled 4-10 days after PTE exposure with follow-up PFAs 30-45 days after the initial intervention. The purpose of the Peer Support Program is not to "cure" or even prevent PTSD; rather, the purpose is to identify individuals at risk and proactively connect individuals with evidence-based treatments, when appropriate.

- Peer Support Webpage, is currently under construction with an expected start date by Fall 2019. To request Peer Support, call (909) 802-1313/1388, or email Bouchw@dcfs.lacounty.gov
- LA County Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available for those experiencing a subjectively defined "Crisis" such as divorce, unemployment, disciplinary action or other stressful life circumstances. Call EAP at (213) 738-4200 or visit their [webpage](#).
- For victims of crime, that includes serving Los Angeles County employees, the Bureau of Victims Services can cover the costs of evidence-based treatment for Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and PTSD. Call 1(800) 380-3811 or visit their [website](#).

VI. Training Opportunities:

- Building a Trauma-Responsive and Resiliency-Strengthening Child Welfare System; available through DCFS' office management.
- Registration for the following Conference is offered through the [Los Angeles County Learning Net](#).
 - ICAN Annual Childhood Grief and Traumatic Loss Conference



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