



# **New York Life Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative**

*School toolkit*



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Schools Initiative

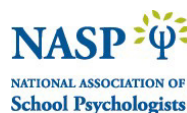
# Thank you for joining over 3,000 schools in becoming a **Grief-Sensitive School**.

Welcome to the Grief-Sensitive Schools (GSSI) network. The Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative (GSSI) is part of New York Life's nationwide effort to better equip educators and other school personnel to care for the grieving students. Through the program, trained New York Life ambassadors connect with schools in their local communities to offer a brief 20-minute presentation on the grief in schools and the dedicated resources available. School that receive this presentation and agree to strive to become Grief-Sensitive, may receive a small grant to support their efforts.

The GSSI program was developed to:

- raise awareness of the prevalence of children's bereavement;
- introduce the Coalition's industry-endorsed bereavement online resource and other bereavement resources;
- incentivize local schools/districts to raise awareness of both this issue and this resource in their school community; and
- to provide a systematic approach and program for Agents and Employees to engage with school communities as brand ambassadors and to foster deeper and more holistic relationships

## Founding Members:



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# Impact



**718**



NYL agents and employees have delivered over

**3,900**



GSSI Presentations to schools across

**48 states**



Resulting in grants totaling more than

**\$1.4M**



## Local school communities

### Schools can join this initiative by:

- Accepting the invitation from a NYL GSSI ambassador
- Requesting a presentation via website
- Referral from one of NYLF's bereavement partners
- Through our GSSI district initiative

### Participating schools agree to:

- Increase awareness of this issue and resources
- Share information with school community about [grievingstudents.org](http://grievingstudents.org) and other resources.
- Review relevant school policies and practices.
- Provide specific professional learning opportunities.
- Posting the "Grief-Sensitive School" decal in school building.



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# Next steps for GSSI Schools



## **Offer dedicated bereavement support training to your school community:**

- Utilize one of the [pre-recorded videos](#) developed for educator training and:
  - either show during a staff meeting OR
  - assign to staff to view individually and discuss at a staff meeting
- Invite a local bereavement center or program to provide training during a professional development session or during a faculty meeting
- Ensure training for any new educators or school staff
- Provide more advanced training for your school mental health/pupil services professionals (e.g., school counselors, nurses, psychologists, and social workers)
- Offer a brief presentation to your parent organization

## **Access free resources:**

- [Order and/or download free resources](#)
- [Leverage resources with GSSI partners](#)
- Partner with the local bereavement center as a referral and/or program partner
- Become familiar with resources and supports provided through the [National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement](#)
- Consider on-site peer support program for grieving students – either conducted by school-based or community-based (e.g., from local bereavement center/program) professionals
- [Sign up for our newsletter](#) which highlights new and ongoing resources and tools, free webinars and training plus more

## **Review school policies related to bereavement, including:**

- Attendance policies that don't penalize students/staff for absences related to funerals and other mourning rituals
- Faculty/staff bereavement leave benefits
- Communications with families of deceased students
- Commemoration and memorialization, including considerations related to death by suicide and spontaneous memorials
- Virtual memorials
- Graduation (e.g., granting posthumous degrees)
- Recognition of students/staff who died in yearbook and other end of the year activities
- Limiting on-site funerals, wakes, and related services



# Bereavement partners supporting GSSI schools

## Bereavement partners can support GSSI schools by:

- [Becoming a Friend of the Coalition to Support Grieving Students](#)
- Partnering to introduce GSSI and Coalition to Support Grieving Students to local schools and school communities
- Co-presenting with the local NYL GSSI ambassador(s)
- Serving as a resource to the local NYL office and the school communities
- Providing follow-up training, resources and support to schools/school communities

***As members of the GSSI network, there are a variety of resources available to you!***



## Helpful Web sites

[www.grievingstudents.org](http://www.grievingstudents.org)

The Coalition to Support Grieving Students is a collaboration of organizations representing the full range of school professionals. The Coalition's goal is to share a set of industry-endorsed, free resources that will empower school communities across America in the ongoing support of their grieving students. [Guide](#) to using the Coalition Resources in supporting grieving students during the pandemic.

[www.newyorklife.com/foundation](http://www.newyorklife.com/foundation)

New York Life Foundation's dedicated site, [achildingrief.com](http://achildingrief.com), provides information on bereavement support resources, tools and expert information. Information ranges from articles to podcasts to dedicated tools for bereaved youth and the people who want to support them.

[www.schoolcrisiscenter.org](http://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org)

[National Center for School Crisis & Bereavement](#) is a dedicated center supporting students through crisis and loss. The center offers crisis response, education & training, and advocacy & research initiatives. The NCSCB coordinates the Coalition.



## Professional development opportunities for:

[Mental Health Professionals and School Staff](#)

[Educators and All School Professionals](#)

[Parents and Caregivers](#)



## Best practices and guidance documents

Templates and guidelines to help school communities respond to the needs of students and staff after a death.

[Templates for sample notifications](#)

[Guidance documents](#)

[Psychological First Aid for Students & Teachers](#)

[Guidance on polices:](#)

- Guidelines for Responding to the Death of a Student or School Staff
- Guidance on Death by Suicide

### [Additional modules:](#)

- Guidelines: Communicating with the Family After a Student Has Died
- Back-to-School Considerations

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# Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative Resources for Schools



## Professional Development Opportunities

### Mental Health Professionals and School Staff

[Supporting students coping with grief and loss : Webinar](#) on how to support students who are grieving the death of a family member, friend, or peer in general, and specifically during the pandemic

[When School Starts Back: Helping students and you cope with crisis and loss during the COVID-19 pandemic: Webinar](#) on how to support students and adults in the school with both the crisis of the pandemic and grief

[When School Starts Back: Helping students and you cope with crisis during a pandemic: Webinar](#) on how to support students with the crisis and loss associated with the COVID-19 pandemic (this is an abbreviated presentation that combines the key points from the two presentations for school mental health providers).

### Educators and All School Professionals

[Teacher Training Module: Part 1 Training Module - Video](#)

Presented by the Coalition to Support Grieving Students. The first teacher module will help school staff understand the experience of the grieving student and includes information about how children understand death and express their grief.

[Teacher Training Module: Part 2 Training Module - Video](#)

Presented by the Coalition to Support Grieving Students. The second teacher module presents practical suggestions about how school staff can initiate the conversation and offer support to the grieving student.

[Teacher Training Module: Part 3 Training Module - Video](#)

Presented by the Coalition to Support Grieving Students. The third teacher module presents practical guidance about how to coordinate resources and manage special issues while you support the grieving child.

[Supporting grieving children in schools - Webinar](#)

Presented by the Coalition to Support Grieving Students. This presentation, intended for all school professionals, combines highlights from the Teacher Training modules 1-3 in an abbreviated format, including how children understand death and express their grief; how to initiate the conversation and offer support; and how to coordinate resources and manage special issues while supporting grieving students. It highlights and connects to materials on the Coalition to Support Grieving Students website for further information.



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## Parents and Caregivers

### [Helping Children cope with crisis and loss during the pandemic - Webinar](#)

*Presented by the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement*

Presentation for parents and other caregivers on how to support children with the crisis and loss associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The common reactions that may be seen in children during the pandemic and practical advice on how to support children during this time are reviewed. Suggestions on how to support grieving children is presented, with information about the resources of the Coalition to Support Grieving Students.

### [Talking to and supporting your children during the pandemic - Webinar](#)

*Presented by the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement*

This brief presentation for parents and other caregivers, taped in April 2020, reviews basic approaches to talking with and supporting children during the COVID-19 pandemic to help them understand and begin to cope with this crisis.



## Additional trainings and resources

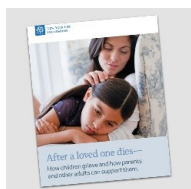
- For large-scale training and webinars: contact the [New York Life Foundation](#) to discuss a potential larger session
- New York Life Foundation in partnership with a variety of experts offers timely webinars throughout the year
- Certifications and specialized training: [Certifications for Grief and Loss Specialist available from American School Counselor Association](#)



# Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative

*Free booklets and pamphlets for school personnel and parents*

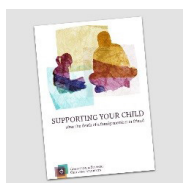
These resources are available either in hard copy or downloadable/pdf. To order these resources, please visit [www.achildgrief.com](http://www.achildgrief.com) and click on 'Free Printed Materials'. Please note, all materials are free and ship for free. For your convenience, you can download these resources with the links below.



## **After a Loved One Dies: How Children Grieve and How Parents and Other Adults Can Support Them**

This booklet explains how children grieve and the ways parents and other caring adults can help them understand death better.

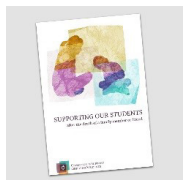
- [English e-booklet](#)
- [Spanish e-booklet](#)



## **Supporting your Child brochure**

This brochure provides advice to parents and caregivers on supporting children who are grieving.

- [English e-booklet](#)
- [Spanish e-booklet](#)



## **Supporting your Student brochure**

Developed by the Coalition to Support Grieving Students, this pamphlet offers advice to educators and school personnel on how to support grieving students and how classmates can help.

- [English e-booklet](#)



## **What To Say/Not To Say Tip Card**

Wallet-size tip cards offer valuable advice on how to speak with children who have experienced the death of a loved one.



## **Kai's Journey: The Golden Sweater**

The Kai's Journey series begins with The Golden Sweater, which focuses on the newness of loss and getting your bearings in a world without that significant person in your life. This story shows how Kai's mom also adapts to her new world.

- [English e-booklet](#)
- [Spanish e-booklet](#)