

# National Alliance for Grieving Children

## Standards of Practice

### Purpose

This document provides professional Standards of Practice for organizations or individuals offering bereavement support services or counseling to children or teenagers grieving a death. While the intention of the document is not to govern the services of professionals, we believe these standards provide a guide to best practices. It was written by professionals throughout the childhood bereavement field (listed at the end of document), and reflects the values and practices of a variety of support models.

### About the National Alliance for Grieving Children and its Membership

#### *Who We Are*

As a collective voice, the National Alliance for Grieving Children (NAGC) advocates, educates and raises awareness about issues related to childhood bereavement. We provide a network for nationwide communication between hundreds of professionals and volunteers who share ideas, information, and resources with each other in order to better support the grieving children and families they serve in their communities. Through this network, the NAGC offers online education; hosts an annual symposium on children's grief; maintains a national data base of children's bereavement support programs; and promotes national awareness to enhance public sensitivity to grieving children, teenagers and their families.

#### *NAGC Mission*

The National Alliance for Grieving Children promotes awareness about the needs of children and teens grieving a death and provides education and resources for anyone who wants to support them.

## Core Values & Guiding Principles

### *Dignity, Respect, and Right to Self-Determination*

We believe in the dignity and worth of the individual, including the individual's ability to heal, and their right to be understood, heard and supported during bereavement. We respect each individual's right to self-determination, understanding that each person's grief is unique, including their cultural background, family beliefs, individual personality, relationship with the person who died, and personal grieving style.

## Standards of Practice

### *Service and Program Description*

Service providers will provide the public and program participants with both written and verbal information regarding their purpose, mission, type of service, scope of service, fees associated with services, and referrals for needs outside the provider's scope of services.

### *Competency*

Individuals and institutions working with and or supporting children and families will be knowledgeable about the current literature, research, and best practices. Providers will make efforts to ensure that they are fully informed, well-versed, and diversified in their knowledge of grief and best practices, demonstrating competencies in all applicable areas of expertise pertaining to their stated skills and offerings. Service providers will be committed to receiving on-going education pertaining to subject matters relevant to their work.

### *Safety*

Service providers will have safety, reporting and staff/volunteer screening policies in accordance with state and local laws when working with children. These policies will be designed to protect children and their families from potential incidents of misconduct and injuries, protect employees and volunteers from potential false accusations of misconduct, and limit any risks associated with providing children's bereavement services. Service providers will engage at least a master's level trained mental health or human services professional for the purpose of supervision and consultation, whether that individual is a staff member, consultant, or volunteer.

### *Equality / Non-Discrimination*

Providers will respect the cultural, ethnic, gender, racial, sexual-orientation, economic, and religious diversity of all and work to eliminate any barriers to accessing services. Providers will strive for cultural competence and demonstrate cultural humility, and seek education and resources as needed to better serve their clientele.

### *Confidentiality & Data Protection*

Proper measures will be taken to ensure that stories and shared information remain confidential within all formats and contexts, including data collection, paperwork or files, on-line systems, and other ways personal information is stored or collected. Staff and volunteers will be trained to preserve the integrity of confidentiality as it applies to their roles and responsibilities. Proper action, policies, and procedures will be implemented in order to preserve the confidentiality of collected information about individuals and families, complying with established state, federal, and professional confidentiality requirements, as well as mandatory reporting regulations.

### *Dual Relationships / Conflicts of Interest*

Service providers will have staff and volunteer guidelines regarding dual relationships (two or more distinct kinds of relationships with the same person) and conflicts of interest (a clash between self-interest, professional interest, or public interest) to protect families from harm or exploitation. These guidelines enhance the integrity of the organization and the safety of the child or family receiving support services. Examples that constitute dual relationships include, but are not limited to, sexual or intimate relationships, relationships for the purpose of monetary gain or personal favors, and relationships that blur the boundaries between professional and personal lives.

### *Referral*

Providers will maintain an up to date list of community referrals that address a variety of social, mental health, emotional, and spiritual needs.

### *Policies & Procedures*

Service providers and programs will have written policies and procedures that are in line with the provider's mission, values, and service description.

### *Evaluation*

Service providers will provide consistent program evaluation for evidence of program effectiveness and modify services as needed in order to continuously improve practices.

## *Volunteer Training & Support*

Organizations and programs that utilize program volunteer services will maintain the highest standards for volunteers by providing volunteers with a code of conduct, on-going education, training, and evaluation. Programs will require volunteers to receive continuing education and will create programmatic infrastructure that supports the emotional well-being and needs of its volunteers.

## *Self-care*

Providers will commit to self-care for staff and volunteers. Self-care should be a formalized part of each provider's practice built into debriefings, briefings or continued education. Self-care is an expectation for all providers, volunteers, staff and board members and practitioners.

## *Advocacy*

Providers are encouraged to do outreach in their local communities and to contribute to national efforts to raise awareness of the issues impacting grieving children, teens, and families.

### **2013 NAGC Standards of Practice Board Committee**

Vicki Jay | Executive Director  
Midland Shared Spaces | Midland, Texas

Marian Mankin, LCSW | Program Director  
Bo's Place | Houston, Texas

Michelle A. Post, MA, LMFT | Manager, Donor Family Aftercare  
OneLegacy a donate life organization | Los Angeles, California

Joseph M. Primo, M.Div. | Chief Executive Officer  
Good Grief | Morristown and Princeton, New Jersey

Kelley Romweber | President & CEO  
Brooke's Place for Grieving Young People | Indianapolis, Indiana

Andy McNiel | Chief Executive Officer  
National Alliance for Grieving Children | Stuart, Florida

### **Standards of Practice Review Committee**

Jan Borgman, MSW, LISW-S, FT | Bereavement Manager  
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center | Cincinnati, Ohio



Donna A Gaffney, DNSc, PMHCNS-BC, FAAN | Advisor for Education and Research  
Project Rebirth | New York, New York

Pamela Gabbay, MA, FT | Director  
The Mourning Star Center | Palm Desert, California

Bethany Gardner, MA, LMHCA | Camp Erin Program Manager  
The Moyer Foundation | Seattle, WA

Brook Griese, Ph.D. | Co-Founder & Chief Clinical Officer  
Judi's House | Denver, CO

Judith H. Hanson, LCSW | Certified Trauma Consultant  
Private Practice | St. Charles, Illinois

Kimberley Kaufmann, LCSW | Clinical Advisor  
Comfort Zone Camp | Franklin Square, New York

Mary McCutchen, MSW | Volunteer Coordinator  
Fernside Supporting Children and Families through Grief | Cincinnati, Ohio

Donna L. Schuurman, Ed.D., FT | Chief Executive Officer  
The Dougy Center for Grieving Children & Families | Portland, Oregon