

FINDING THE WORDS



When someone in your community has died of COVID-19



The National Grief Center for Children & Families

As a school administrator or leader of an organization, you may be faced with notifying students, staff, families, and participants that someone in your community has died of COVID-19. Ideally, sharing the news that someone has died happens in person, in small groups and classrooms, with time for students to process their reactions. We recognize though that you might be using a combination of in person, email, text, and video meetings. We created these sample scripts for you to use in crafting these communications. There are scripts specifically for sharing the news with children and teens and a version for notifying parents and caregivers. Please adapt as needed to ensure that the information and wording are accurate and culturally relevant for your particular community.

CHILD AND TEEN SAMPLE SCRIPT

I have some very sad news to share with you all. (Student/teacher's name) died on (date) and their family gave us permission to share that they died of COVID-19.

Many of you will have lots of different feelings — you might be sad, angry, confused, or scared. Some of you will feel numb or like you don't feel anything at all. If you knew (student/teacher's name), you might have a lot of memories of times you spent together. Even if you didn't know them, you might feel worried

or concerned about your health and the health of the people in your life, or you might be thinking about other people you're missing.

There are no right or wrong feelings to have when someone dies. It's different for everyone.

We'll have some time today to talk about any thoughts, feelings, or other reactions you're having, but if you need more support today or in the next days, weeks, and months, please ask me or [insert name of staff member] for help.

If we receive information about plans for a memorial, we will share that with you.

Here are two important resources that are available 24/7 if you need additional support:

National Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255

Crisis Text Line: text Hello to 741741

These scripts can be adapted for different situations by changing the first two lines. If the cause of death is not confirmed or if the family has not given permission to share that information, you can say "The family has requested that their privacy be honored at this time." These scripts can also be used if someone in your community dies from another cause such as an illness, accident, suicide, or violent death.

PARENT AND CAREGIVER SAMPLE SCRIPT

I have some very sad news to share with you all. (Student/teacher's name) died on (date) and their family gave us permission to share that they died of COVID-19.

Your children may have a variety of reactions, depending on their age, relationship with the person who died, and past experiences with grief and loss. You might notice your children expressing sadness, anger, confusion, fear, or no visible reaction at all. Even if your children did not know (student/teacher's name), this death might bring up additional fears for their health and the health and safety of people they care about. Your child might need additional emotional and physical reassurance and nurturing during this time.

It can be helpful to remember that there are no right or wrong feelings to have when someone dies, and that grief is different for everyone.

Our school is here for you and your family. If you'd like to discuss any questions or reactions you're seeing in your child, you can reach out to [insert name and contact information of school staff members available to the family.]

If we receive information about plans for a memorial, we will share that with you.

Here are some resources for you and your children during this time:

[Grief & COVID-19 Resources](#)

[Supporting Children & Teens When a Close Friend Dies Now What? Tips for Grieving Teens](#)

[Your Friend is Grieving – Tips for Supporting Them](#)

If you or your children need additional support, these two crisis lines are available 24/7:

National Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255

Crisis Text Line: text Hello to 741741



The mission of Dougy Center is to provide grief support in a safe place where children, teens, young adults, and their families can share their experiences before and after a death. We provide support and training locally, nationally, and internationally to individuals and organizations seeking to assist children who are grieving.

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This resource was funded by the Brave of Heart Fund, founded by the Foundations of New York Life and Cigna and administered by E4E Relief. The Brave of Heart Fund was established in 2020 to provide charitable grants and emotional support services to families of the frontline healthcare workers, volunteers, and support staff whose lives were lost in the fight against COVID-19. It continues to offer support to these bereaved families via partnerships with non-profit organizations aligned with the fund's core purposes.

employeerelieffund.org/brave-of-heart-fund