**Faculty and Staff Resources for Supporting Children and Families**

**after a COVID-19 related Loss**

**Things to keep in mind with regards to your students:**

* In your interactions with your students, if you are ever concerned about a student or parent or how they may be managing their grief or sadness, be sure to notify your principal, school counselor or district designee.
* While conducting online meetings/class, acknowledge the loss and that everyone may be experiencing grief or sadness in different ways. Emphasize that adults are here to help and make clear to the students how they can access the counselors and/or other adults should they need or want to talk. Encourage students to talk about the loss and consider following up via email or other technology platform for those students who might be hesitant to verbalize their feelings during the online meeting
* During online meetings, consider leading the class in a mindfulness exercise to help ground them and be present in the moment- a simple breathing exercise can sometimes go a long way
* Try to end your online classes with something joyful/happy - to help remind students to let joy and gratitude into their lives even in moments of sadness and grief
* Consider creating a google doc message board for the school/district where students can post comments and memories of the deceased. This document can later be shared with the family of the deceased.
* Consider connecting with your school or district crisis team point person to offer assistance to the grieving family. Possibly making a meal train to deliver meals to the family, help coordinating/encouraging online “playdates” for kids in the family, creating a care package for the family, etc.

**Things to keep in mind for yourself:**

* **Be sure to take care of yourself and work to practice good self-care** as you are also managing your own connection to this loss (and possibly memories you have of having experienced previous loss) as well. Utilize the resources listed on the Parent Resources page for yourself as needed as well as for/with your students.
* Social distancing and stay at home orders do not mean you are not allowed to connect. The pandemic is forcing us to rethink how we connect to one another. **Make a goal to connect to a family member, friend, colleague, religious connection, neighbor at least once a day.** This may occur via a technology platform like facetime, zoom, google classroom, phone, email or a simple wave and shout of hello across a street or yard.
* **Be mindful of when things have become too much for you.** If you are noticing that your emotions and feelings are interfering with your ability to complete tasks or go about your “new normal” routine seek out your natural support systems immediately. Connect with family, friends, colleagues, mental health providers, employee assistance programs or religious connections. This will allow you to obtain the support you need to reset and stabilize yourself which in turn will allow you to be available to your students.
* **Remember to participate in all the hobbies and activities that bring you joy**. You may not be able to go to the gym, but you can exercise on your own, follow a workout video or even possibly join an online group workout. Now can also be a great time to find, learn or develop a new skill or hobby.
* **Take time to practice gratefulness.** Make a list on paper or in your mind of all for which you can be thankful. It could be as simple as the fact that the sun is shining, you had a good night’s sleep or you saw a tulip sprouting outside. Focusing on the things that we are grateful for allows us to redirect the sadness and anxiety we may be feeling and confront our tasks with a more positive outlook.
* **Make time to get outside each day.** Getting some fresh air can help clear the mind, settle emotions, and let us be more present in the moment. Going for a walk or a run to get some exercise is great, but even just sitting for a bit can prove beneficial.Exercise has proven to increase your endorphins which leads to improved mood and mindset.
* **Just Breathe.** While not everyone feels comfortable with the idea of meditation, taking a few moments each day to simply take in some deep breaths and quiet your mind allows your physical body to reset and regroup. If you want to practice this in a more formal fashion two wonderful meditation apps are Calm and Headspace. They are great for both beginners and seasoned practitioners alike.

**Online Resources**

[Self-care Resource for Educators and Mental Health Staff](https://storage.trailstowellness.org/trails-2/covid-19-resources/self-care-during-covid-19.pdf)

[Addressing Grief: Tips for Teachers and Administrators](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/addressing-grief/addressing-grief-tips-for-teachers-and-administrators) (downloadable as a PDF from NASP)

[National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement](https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org/resources/covid-19-pandemic-resources/): The Coalition to Support Grieving Students shares resources including [Supporting Grieving Students During a Pandemic – A guide to using the Coalition to Support Grieving Students materials](https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Supporting-Grieving-Students-During-a-Pandemic-guidance-for-Coalition-website.April-5-2020.pdf) and Educator and Parent video presentations on talking to and supporting students and ourselves during the pandemic.

**Reporting Abuse/Neglect During School Closure**

If a staff member obtains information through video or phone or a report is made to a staff member through email or any other digital communication that leads the staff member to believe a student is subject to abuse or neglect, he/she must fulfill his/her obligation as a mandated reporter. The staff member may be required to file a report of abuse/neglect (51A) with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and must inform administration of the incident using the following procedures:

* When a staff member witnesses or is made aware of information that leads them to believe abuse/neglect has occurred, the staff member should ensure the student’s immediate safety, and dial 911 if it is a true emergency.
* If the situation does not warrant emergency services being contacted immediately, staff should document the information they witnessed or that was shared with them and contact their building principal, outlining the details of the incident.
* The administrative team including social work/mental health staff will consult regarding next steps and may reach out to the staff member to obtain more information and/or support them in filing a report of abuse/neglect with DCF.

**Reporting Concerns Regarding Student Safety During School Closure**

If a staff member obtains information through video or phone or a report is made to a staff member through email or any other digital communication that leads the staff member to believe a student is engaging in unsafe behavior, self harm, and/or indicating thoughts of suicide, he/she must inform administration of the incident using the following procedures:

* When a staff member witnesses or is made aware of information that leads them to believe a student is engaging in unsafe behavior, self harm, and/or indicating thoughts of suicide, the staff member should ensure the student’s immediate safety, and dial 911 if it is a true emergency.
* If the situation does not warrant emergency services being contacted immediately, staff should document the information they witnessed or that was shared with them and contact their building principal, outlining the details of the incident.
* The administrative team including social work/mental health staff will consult regarding next steps, including consulting with the parent/guardian, student’s mental health clinician if applicable, and may reach out to the staff member to obtain more information.