



## *School Services Program Overview*

In a recent survey by the American Federation of Teachers and the New York Life Association, 7 in 10 teachers (69%) currently have at least one student in their class(es) who has lost a parent, guardian, sibling, or close friend in the past year. However, only 7 percent of classroom teachers report that they have received any specific training on the subject of childhood bereavement. This lack of training subsequently makes it more difficult for educators to know how to reach out to help these students.

The Highmark Caring Place is addressing the needs of grieving children in schools in Western and Central Pennsylvania. Through the programs and services it offers to schools, the goals of the Caring Place are to:

- ♦ Raise awareness of the impact of death on students and their need for support
- ♦ Increase the overall sensitivity of the school culture toward students who have had someone close to them die
- ♦ Increase the knowledge and skills of teachers and administrators in the area of child and adolescent bereavement and the impact of grief on students in the classroom and how to help them cope
- ♦ Increase the knowledge and skills of school students in how to provide support to their grieving classmates

These goals are accomplished through the following services and resources provided at no cost by the Caring Place to interested schools:

- ♦ **Tours**—Caring Team coordinators, school staff, and school administrators are welcome to tour the Caring Place to learn more about the impact of death on children as well as how the Caring Place is a resource that can help. Specialized tours for students can also be arranged.
- ♦ **Training**—Caring Place staff members are available to schools to provide training about the grief of children and teens in general and/or its specific impact in the school environment.
- ♦ **Consultation**—Caring Place staff members are available to consult with school staff about situations in your school involving a grieving student.
- ♦ **Classroom Presentations**—Caring Place staff members are available to present to students as part of a classroom curriculum (e.g. health class) about the impact of grief, how to get support if they need it, and how to support a friend who is grieving.
- ♦ **Peer Support Groups for Grieving Students**—Caring Place staff members are available to facilitate a peer support group within your school for students who have had someone close to them die while training school staff to become group facilitators.
- ♦ **Peer Support Groups for Grieving Children and Families**—The Caring Place is a referral for schools to provide to families who may be in need of support after the death of a loved one.
- ♦ **Resources**—A variety of written resources are available as well as electronic information via the Caring Place website, and social media sources including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

# *Peer Support Groups for Grieving Students*

## **What is the program designed to address?**

The program is designed to systematically address non-complicated grief of children and teens in elementary, middle and high school within the school setting.

## **What is the goal of the program?**

The program works to provide a safe environment for participants to connect with peers who are also grieving, and to be able to express their feelings related to the death and to share memories of the person who died. Through this process the children have the opportunity to learn that they are not alone; to become familiar with peers who understand what they are going through so they can go to them for support if needed; and to learn healthy coping mechanisms.

## **Who is the program designed to serve?**

The program is designed to serve children and teens:

- ♦ who have had a family member or friend die at any point of time in their lives
- ♦ who have been identified by a designated staff person at their school as appropriate for a school-based group
- ♦ who are not suffering from untreated symptoms of trauma related to the death
- ♦ who can function appropriately in a peer support group
- ♦ who have been given permission by their parent/guardian to participate in the group

If you are interested in your school becoming involved in the program, please contact the Caring Place School Services Coordinator in your area:

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