

Eli's Hospice Insider

Bereavement: Factor These Facets of Bereavement Care Into Your Programs

Grief programs can lead to hospice process improvement.

Hospice-provided bereavement care can provide a broad range of benefits to the grieving. According to **Theo Munson, MPH**, manager of bereavement services for Lifetime Care/Hospice in Rochester, N.Y., a comprehensive program should include the following:

- Follow-up when professional home visitors predict that the primary caregiver will have a challenging bereavement course.
- Check in with family members because you can't always predict how grief will unfold.
- Convey the message that the patient, family, and staff went through a major event together and that the loss matters to the provider.
- Remind family members that they don't have to handle their grief alone -- that bereavement care is a choice they have at no expense.
- Track down answers to nagging questions and address concerns of the bereaved.
- Educate about symptoms of normal and complicated grief.
- Prevent and treat post-traumatic stress disorder, isolation, numbing, bitterness, and physical symptoms.
- Give printed materials and information about resources to turn to when the time is right.
- Collaborate with administrators to address dissatisfaction with hospice care events.
- Provide supportive counseling to people who wouldn't ordinarily access mental health services.
- Supplement the work of other professional caregivers.
- Support hospice staff by debriefing them after challenging experiences as well as "picking up the baton" so that the rest of the team feels better about going on to new families and new attachments.