

Support victims, survivors and witnesses who have suffered bereavement

Overview

This standard is about supporting victims, survivors and witnesses who are experiencing the traumatic grief associated with bereavement through crime, caused by road death, murder, manslaughter or culpable homicide. It involves providing individuals with initial support to ensure that their immediate needs are met, including giving accurate information about the practical and criminal justice procedures that follow death, and where appropriate the stages that these procedures have reached.

It includes talking with individuals about the bereavement, and how it has affected them, and considering what might enable them to manage their experience. It also involves assessing with individuals the further support that they or their family may need to manage the effects of their experience. The effects may be psychological, physiological or social, with impacts on personal security and safety.

The term 'support' might include the provision of information, practical assistance, counselling and emotional therapy, safety and protection, health care, and help with media attention.

There are two elements

1. Provide initial support to victims, survivors and witnesses who have suffered bereavement
2. Provide further support to victims, survivors and witnesses who have suffered bereavement

Target group

This standard is applicable to those who provide support and other services to victims, survivors and witnesses. Work with bereaved individuals is a specialist role undertaken by those with considerable experience of working with individuals affected by crime.

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Performance criteria

You must be able to:

Provide initial support to victims, survivors and witnesses who have suffered bereavement

1. hold meetings in an appropriate and safe environment for the individual, taking into account their physical and emotional needs
2. introduce yourself and take the relevant actions towards welcoming the individual in line with their needs
3. explain your organisation's policy relating to confidentiality
4. confirm that all persons accompanying victims, survivors and witnesses understand their role in the process
5. explain your role in making initial support, and provide your contact details including information on when you may be contacted
6. listen and respond to the points made, communicating using techniques which suit the needs and abilities of the victims, survivors and witnesses
7. support individuals to express their grief in ways appropriate to them
8. assist individuals to identify and to explore those aspects of their lives affected by the bereavement and determine those which are priorities to address
9. provide relevant and accurate information to individuals at a manageable level and pace
10. assist individuals to identify what they feel able to manage themselves and where they need support from others
11. answer questions in an open and honest manner and seek information from others where appropriate
12. clarify the kind of support available to individuals from their family, friends or community members, without being intrusive
13. ascertain if individuals need immediate practical help, and organise how this will be provided within agreed timescales, liaising with other organisations where appropriate
14. take the necessary steps to safeguard the person's immediate safety and wellbeing where this is under threat
15. explain to the individual what will happen next and seek, if needed, consent to an agreed course of action
16. manage your own feelings about the death and about the bereaved individuals' reaction to the death, using appropriate methods of support

Assist people as they support victims, survivors and witnesses in managing their experience

17. liaise with other organisations where appropriate, to confirm the accuracy of

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information

18. listen and respond to the points made, communicating using techniques which suit the needs and abilities of the victims, survivors and witnesses
19. provide information within agreed timescales to individuals, where requested and in line with your role, about the progress of the case and who is responsible for making decisions, liaising as necessary with other organisations to confirm the accuracy of information
20. assist individuals to further identify and explore those aspects of their lives affected by the bereavement and determine those which are priorities to address
21. provide prompt reassurance to individuals that although their feelings and reactions are unique to them as individuals, they are normal and common responses to the experience of bereavement through crime
22. assist individuals to identify what they feel able to manage themselves and where they need support from others
23. explain clearly the options for support and other services available from your own organisation and those available from other organisations
24. assist individuals to decide for themselves the options that would help them most
25. agree with individuals any plans for further support in order to meet their needs, and ask questions to check for understanding
26. organise the involvement of other organisations, where needed, confirming that individuals give their informed consent to the sharing of information about their circumstances
27. seek advice from an appropriate colleague if you are unsure about how to proceed
28. maintain records of the agreed plans for further support and the resulting actions, in accordance with organisational requirements
29. provide accurate information to the individual about when and how to contact you and your organisation in the future

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Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

Legislative, regulatory and organisational requirements

1. legal and organisational requirements which relate to supporting victims, survivors and witnesses and assessing their needs for further support, and their impact for your area of operations
2. legislation, policies and procedures relating to data protection, health and safety, diversity and their impact for your area of operations
3. the role of your organisation and its services and the services which it provides in supporting victims, survivors and witnesses who have suffered bereavement
4. organisational policy and procedures regarding confidentiality of information and the disclosure of information to third parties, and the specific circumstances under which disclosure may be made
5. organisational requirements relating to allowing others to be present in discussions with victims/survivors/witnesses, and the relative benefits and disadvantages that the presence of others can create
6. the limits of your authority and responsibility, and the actions to take if these are exceeded

Working within the community justice sector

7. good practice communication techniques relevant to the situation and how to apply them
8. the services and referral criteria and procedures of groups and organisations who offer help to bereaved families
9. the kinds of medical and therapeutic support available to help bereaved families with their grief
10. the practical procedures that follow road death, murder, manslaughter or culpable homicide, including:
 - 10.1 viewing the body
 - 10.2 post mortem
 - 10.3 inquest or fatal accident inquiry
 - 10.4 funeral arrangements
 - 10.5 wills
 - 10.6 the practical and emotional needs of bereaved families during these procedures
11. the criminal justice procedures that follow road death, murder, manslaughter or culpable homicide, including:
 - 11.1 the investigation

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- 11.2 arrest
- 11.3 charge
- 11.4 bail decisions
- 11.5 trial
- 11.6 changes in plea
- 11.7 sentence, appeal, post-sentence and release arrangements
- 11.8 the practical and emotional needs of bereaved families during these processes
- 12. how the grieving process following death by road accident, murder, manslaughter or culpable homicide can be chronic, delayed, exaggerated and masked because of the trauma of the event
- 13. how and why particular triggers might affect those grieving for a road death, murder, manslaughter or culpable homicide victim
- 14. how different cultures, religions and ethnicity may affect procedures for dealing with bodies, including the way bereaved families approach their grief and the support available from relevant organisations
- 15. the needs of those who have experienced bereavement who may be particularly vulnerable, including:
 - 15.1 children and young people
 - 15.2 people with mental health problems
 - 15.3 people with learning difficulties
- 16. how the grief experienced by bereaved families may affect the way they respond to offers of help and support
- 17. the way that mental health services are organised and delivered, the agencies and practitioners involved and how to access their services and expertise
- 18. the role of your organisation and its services and how they relate to other organisations and services in the community justice sector
- 19. the options for supporting individuals and the reasoning processes used in determining the most appropriate options for the individual concerned

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