

Support for Grieving COAs

Across the United States, a growing number of children are grieving the loss—not only of loved ones to death—but also of connection, stability, and safety due to the far-reaching impacts of the chronic disease of addiction.

According to a recent study, more than 321,000 U.S. children lost a parent to drug overdose from 2011 to 2021. A recent federal study shows lives lost from the overdose crisis are felt across generations, emphasizing need to include children and families in support, especially when they have lost parents to the disease of addiction, or if substances were utilized during suicide.

These children are often forgotten or ignored - and sometimes even blamed - when parental death involves alcohol, drugs, or other substances. These children need the support of safe adults to help identify and manage their grief, as well as heal from the layers of trauma they have endured.

Helpful Resources to Support Children

- **Grief by Age: Developmental Stages and Ways to Help**
  https://elunanetwork.org/resources/developmental-grief-responses
- **Sesame Workshop: Grief – Information and resources for young children**
  https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/grief
- **National Alliance for Grieving Children Grief Resource Library**
  https://nacg.org/resource-library
  - **Supporting Children Grieving a Substance-Use Related Death**
    https://nacoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Supporting-Youth-Grieving-a-Substance-Related-Death_NACG.pdf
  - **Responding to Change & Loss: In Support to Children, Teens & Families**
    https://nacoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/5.20-NAGC_Activity_Booklet-Responding_to_Change__Loss.pdf
- **Dougy Center Grief Resources**
  https://www.dougy.org/grief-support-resources
- **Understanding the Childhood Grief: What Should We Tell the Children?**
  F Assadi, International Journal of Preventive Medicine, 2023
  https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10580192
- **Hope HQ**
  https://hope-hq.com/
- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network**
  https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/power_of_parenting_how_to_help_your_child_after_the_death_of_a_sibling_from_substance_use_or_overdose.pdf
- **Child Mind Institute Guide: Helping Children Cope With Grief**
  https://childmind.org/guide/helping-children-cope-with-grief/
- **Parents Magazine: Signs of Grief in Children and How To Help Them Cope**
  https://www.parents.com/signs-of-grief-in-children-and-how-to-help-them-cope-8643690
- **Camp Erin - an educational support camp experience for grieving children**
  https://elunanetwork.org/camps-programs/camp-erin/
- **The Center for Grieving Children Community Webinars**
  https://www.cgcmaine.org/service/community-webinars/https://www.cgcmaine.org/service/community-webinars/
- **Book List for Supporting the Loss of a Parent**
  www.allinahealth.org/health-conditions-and-treatments/grief-resources/suggested-books/books-for-grieving-children#parent

Learn more about how to help children impacted by the disease of addiction.
Nacoa.org