**Mental Health Staff Considerations: COVID-19**

**Virtual Vigils/Memorials/Funerals**

**NOTE: It is highly recommended to consult with your district's central office and technology administration to make sure any response is aligned with the district acceptable use policy.**

**While STARS does not recommend schools or districts host vigils/memorials or services for a loss, mental health staff may be asked by parents and family their thoughts on holding such virtual rituals. If this happens the following are some considerations to share with the family.**

The COVID 19 situation requires us to notice our emotions more carefully, to honor them in a way, to access them, and we may have to do that by ourselves more than we typically would do. Having people around us mourning with us allows us to access those feelings, and when we are isolated, it can be harder to do that. It can also be scarier to do that. There’s this uncertainty that goes along with grief and loss. That can be heightened in the absence of consistent social support.

* **Any kind of social support can help**. One of the perverse upsides of live streaming funerals and burials is that it could allow people from out of state or out of the country, who wouldn’t be able to get there anyway, offer support.
* Depending how public someone feels comfortable making it, it could **allow for more acquaintances to be a part of the experience,** so people who might not have paid respects in person but nonetheless wish to offer support can be present. There might be more people who can relate to what someone is going through, and it might reach a broader audience and broader social network from which the family can draw support.
* **The key step is to recommend to the immediate family to share what their wishes are and to be very clear on what they would like.** Then, suggest to the family that they designate or ask one or two point people who can oversee the process — those people who are more savvy with technology, or someone removed from the situation so they are not so emotionally encumbered to step in and help facilitate. In this way, the family’s wishes are honored and they’re not left to handle those logistics themselves.
  + Recommend to families that they consider the extent they want to open the service to the general public, school audience or town/city.
* **Another important piece, if there is going to be any live streaming,** to make it known to those in attendance and alert them to where the camera is, such that if they don’t want to be inadvertently filmed they can stay out of line or the person recording can know not to pan over them. It is tricky. There are no templates for this, we are really learning and ultimately, it depends on the wishes of the closest survivors to decide what fits their needs.

**Resources for Remote Counseling**

[Best Practices & Crisis Planning Protocols for Remote Meetings with Students](https://docs.google.com/document/d/14Lz39QfCpOh2agk2T5PPOgM5Mdvzm9UL41inDEzeLrY/edit?usp=sharing)

[Mental Health and Well-being Resources](https://sites.google.com/arlington.k12.ma.us/mentalhealthandwellbeing/home?authuser=0) (a compilation of COVID-19 resources from many MA districts)

**Downloadable Handouts for Students, Families, Staff**

NASP: [Helping Children Cope with Loss, Death, and Grief](https://www.nasponline.org/assets/documents/Resources%20and%20Publications/Handouts/Safety%20and%20Crisis/GriefWar.pdf) (downloadable PDF)

NASP: [When Grief/Loss Hits Close to Home: Tips for Caregivers](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/addressing-grief/when-grief/loss-hits-close-to-home-tips-for-caregivers) ([pdf](https://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Resources%20and%20Publications/Resources/Crisis/When_Grief_and_Loss_Hits_Close_to_Home_Tips_for_Caregivers.pdf))

NASP: [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) ([pdf](https://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Resources%20and%20Publications/Resources/Crisis/Addressing_Grief_Tips_for_Teachers_and_Administrators_FINAL.pdf))

NCTSN Traumatic Grief Resource - [What is Traumatic Grief?](https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/traumatic-grief)

Coalition to Support Grieving Students: [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)