

## Talking with Children about Death

It is best when the information of what happened is given by a parent, caregiver or trusted adult. The sooner the information is provided, the better. Below are some suggestions of what children need during this time:

- The truth from a developmental perspective
- Simple, clear, factual information
- Opportunity to ask questions (over and over)
- Consistency and routine
- Adults who can express their feelings and be role models
- Assurance that they are not alone, that we are “in this together”
- Opportunity to express their feelings through playing, talking, journaling, art, music, etc.
- Opportunity to remember and share

Guidelines for Developmental Levels of Students:

### Ages Three to Five

- Are concrete, literal and ego-centric
- Pick up on nonverbal communication
- Believe death is temporary and reversible
- Ask the same questions over and over

### Ages Six to Eight

- Understand death is final and irreversible
- Questions his/her and other's safety
- Worry that illness and death; personifies death (i.e. spirits, ghosts)
- Curious about the causes or details of death

### Ages Nine to Twelve

- Interested in biological causes of death and bereavement rituals
- Have a great sense of right and wrong and may see death as punishment
- Are more available for conversation than younger children

