



Tips When You Know a Family of a Child Who Has Died or is Dying

Help the family identify a family member or friend who will be a central source of information to others. This may be a friend from church, a sister, etc.

Encourage the family to place a recorded message in their voice (if possible) giving an update daily in the case of a very ill child, or funeral arrangement information in the case of a child who has died. Be sure to give the name and number of who may be called to receive additional information. At the end of the message, state something like "Please know your call is important to us but we are focusing on our (child's name may be here if it is a child who is dying) family at this time and it may be a while before we can call you back. We appreciate your call and a message may be left at the tone if you wish."

If you or someone else would really like to help, grocery shopping, cooking, house cleaning, lawn mowing and child care for siblings are some of the most difficult tasks for these families. Don't say... "Call me if you need me," do say, "I would like to bring dinner over, would tomorrow night or Wednesday night be better?"

The Central Resource Person noted above can keep a calendar of meals being prepared including menu, if possible. This helps the family to have a steady flow, versus 3 lasagnas one night and nothing for another 5 days. It is also very helpful to offer housecleaning and lawn treatment especially for the day or so before the funeral service, if there is one. Typically families have had to neglect very basic things. (Notepads, pens, milk, bread, cereal, toilet paper, paper plates, and napkins are great gifts during this time as many people tend to pop in or call.)

Who can help prepare meals for the day of the funeral? Even providers can assist in this area. Chicken from Luby's with homemade baked beans, potato salad from Sam's, with a tray of cookies is always a hit. The chicken can be eaten cold or warm and the other items can be reheated. If possible,

always take dishes that can be discarded. If not, clearly mark names of those bringing dishes.

Can you stay or suggest someone else stay at their home during the funeral/memorial service? You may really want to be there, but maybe another friend of yours or another provider would be willing to do this. Unfortunately, there are many thefts during the time of funerals. Having a person in the home during the service, reduces this risk and allows for the delivery of flowers and gifts during this time.

Don't avoid the family. Saying the Awrong@ thing is better than deserting us. We have become accustomed to you being a part of our week, we miss you when we no longer see you. You may be the only person who knew my child that I feel Asafe@ sharing my feelings with. Mostly, just listen.

What can you say? AI don't know what to say@ is just fine. You=re being honest, and it opens the door for the parents to share their feelings.

Do Say:

I=m Sorry

Call my baby by name.

What can I do for you right now?

Can I do....this for you?

I=m here. I want to listen.

This must be hard for you.

Don=t Say:

You=re young, you can have more children.

Well at least you have another child.

This happened for the best.

Better for this to happen when they are young than when you know them better and have more memories.

There was something wrong with your child anyway.

Don=t be sad, Don=t cry.

Just put all this behind you and move on.

If you need me, call me.

I guess God just needed another angel in heaven.

The information contained in this document is intended only as a resource and should be used as a guide. It is not medical or legal advice. You must determine what is best for your child and your family. You are strongly encouraged to seek additional information from other resources, including your physician, social worker, and or other trusted persons.