



Four Rivers Special Education District

## Middle School Grief Guidelines

**Developmental Level:** Are more verbal and cognitively process information at higher levels; comprehend death as final and unavoidable which may provoke feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and increase risk-taking behaviors.

**Grief Behaviors:** Physical responses including: headaches, stomach problems, sleep disturbances, and changes in eating habits; argumentative; withdrawal; sullenness; anger and fighting; sleepiness; lack of concentration and attentiveness; risk-taking behaviors; unpredictable ups and downs or moodiness; erratic, inconsistent reactions.

### **How to Help:**

- Expect and accept mood swings.
- Provide a supportive environment where students can share, when needed.
- Anticipate increased physical concerns including illness, body aches, and pains.
- Answer questions honestly and provide factual information.
- Allow student to choose whom and how he/she gets support.
- Encourage participation in a school-based educational support group.
- Allow some flexibility in completing school work.
- Encourage physical outlets to release grief.

Adapted from the National Association of School Psychologists online resources for crisis, trauma, and grief.

Piechowski, P., *Coping with the Sudden Death of a Student*.

Schonfeld, D, *After a Loved One Dies-How Children Grieve*; and The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Dealing with Death*.