

A few suggestions as you deal with the recent community tragedy ~ ~ ~

The child care center recognizes that this painful situation affects everyone in various ways. Your child may have been a classmate of (*name of child*). Your family may have been acquainted with the (*name of family*) in the community. Or you may just be feeling extremely upset by this highly publicized tragedy. Each of us will cope in our own unique way. There are some important things to know to help you and your child through this time.

- Talk about your feelings related to this tragedy with other adults you trust—but not where the children can hear you. If possible, they should not be exposed to the circumstances surrounding the deaths.
- Remind friends and family members not to discuss the event around your child. Turn off TV and radio news reports. Talking about the event is different from talking about the friend they have lost and will miss.
- Deal with feelings—

Reassure your child about his or her safety—*"Yes a sad thing happened but I'm keeping you safe and all the grownups in our family and at school will keep you safe."*

Give children permission to talk, or not talk, about the loss of their friend. You could say something like, *"We're all really upset and sad that our friend and his family died. Any time if you feel like talking about (child's name) or making something to remember him, we can."*

Help your child identify his feelings by naming them—*"scared"*, *"sad"*, *"worried"*, *"angry"* or *"confused."* Provide children means to express feelings—drawing, pretend play, stories, puppets.

Respond comfortingly if your child needs additional attention, hugs or clings to you—let her be close to you, give hugs and offer reassurance to help her feel safe.

If your child is concerned about death, use your personal way to explain it. He may have experienced the death of a pet or relative and can understand that animals and people stop breathing and don't eat anymore when they die. Remember, though, not to use words like "went to sleep" as children may become afraid of sleep themselves.

If your family knew the (*name of family*) personally, you may want to seek out counseling to help work through the many strong feelings you're experiencing. You may want to contact your faith community or an organization from the resource list.