



Children's Mental Health in Iowa

Proposed program expansion to address trauma, grief and loss.

EveryStep 
Grief & Loss Services
Home of Amanda the Panda

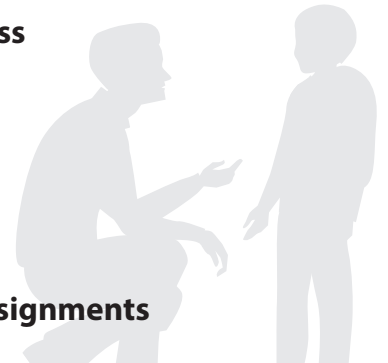
EveryStep proposes a Children's Mental Health project to address awareness/prevention and grief and loss services through an investment of \$200,000.

Experiencing a significant trauma, including a loss and/or death during childhood often results in **profound stress and adversity**, and without appropriate support can significantly derail a child's development. Access to comprehensive resources and grief-focused, trauma-informed care is essential.

Experiencing loss is not unusual, as **1 in 5 children** will experience the death of someone close to them by age 18.*

Similarly, teachers readily identify loss by students in their classrooms. Classroom teachers report** that students who have lost a parent or guardian typically exhibit:

- **Difficulty concentrating in class**
- **Withdrawal/disengagement and less class participation**
- **Absenteeism**
- **Decrease in quality of work**
- **Less reliability in turning in assignments**



DID YOU KNOW?

Unresolved traumatic grief leads to significant negative impact on kids and results in great expense for society. According to a study by Northeastern University, on average, students who drop out of high school cost taxpayers **more than \$292,000 over their lifetime.**



*Kenneth Doka, Editor of OMEGA, Journal of Death and Dying

**Conducted by New York Life Foundation and American Federation of Teachers, 2012

What is Grief?

Grief is a strong, sometimes overwhelming response to many types of loss. The more significant the loss, the more intense the grief is likely to be. Without guidance and coping tools, children are often not able to process grief in a healthy way.

Expanding the Definition of Loss

Grief can be brought on by many types of loss — not just the death of a loved one. Grief that results from other types of loss can be just as intense, and deserving of intervention to help keep children on a healthy path. Some examples include:

Loss of a parent or guardian in the home due to divorce, abandonment, incarceration, mental illness or addiction

Loss of home due to financial hardship or natural disaster

Loss of “self” or sense of security following traumatic events

Loss of culture and homeland for refugee families

How has Amanda the Panda addressed this issue?

Over the past two years, Amanda the Panda has worked with six schools in the Des Moines area to ensure at-risk children are able to manage their grief in a healthy way. We provide opportunities for communication and an understanding community of students that have experienced similar types of loss.

By giving kids healthy coping skills we can help them down a path that leads to healing, positive relationships with others, and success at school. Our group-based approach provides the necessary amount of support for most kids and allows our trained staff to identify those kids who need a higher level of support.

Amanda the Panda is the only program that currently addresses grief and loss in the school system. We are unique in what we do, as we are experts in our field with a combined 25 years of experience.

Average number of students (pre-k – 12) served each year with current staff resources:

83

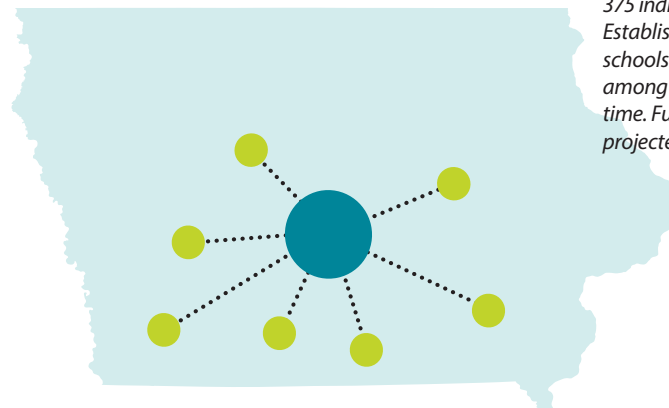
Expanding Our Reach

If funding were to be awarded to cover an additional facilitator, there would be expansion of services from the Des Moines metro to surrounding areas. A full-time facilitator would allow us to serve additional students at rural schools or districts where these type of counseling resources are not as readily available.

Number of students who could POTENTIALLY BE SERVED each year with additional funding:

375

375 indicates maximum capacity. Establishing partnerships with schools and building awareness among staff and parents will take time. Full capacity would not be projected for the first 2 years.



Program Components

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT

Provide tools to help key stakeholders identify individuals who may need intervention. Stakeholders include:

- Child care providers
- Teachers
- Parents
- Physicians/
healthcare providers



ASSESSMENT

• Screening Tools

Provide access to screening tools to prompt early intervention of complicated grief.

• Data Collection

Collect screening data to understand traumatic loss and its affect on mental health.

• Crisis Response

Provide connections to community resources for intervention.

• Quality Outcomes and Reporting (ACES)



SMALL GROUP FACILITATION

Provide small group support to promote healing following traumatic loss.



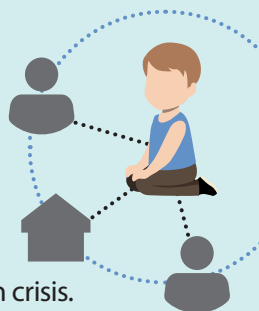
COMMUNITY SUPPORT

• Public Health Education

Create community awareness of the impact that complicated grief has on individuals.

• Resources and Referrals

Coordinate services for individuals in crisis.



Anticipated Outcomes

- Increase in parents' work attendance
- Greater ability for parents to maintain employment or higher productivity at work
- Increase in school attendance
- Improved grades and re-engagement in school
- Decrease in number of doctor and ER visits
- Increase in emotional expression (self-report)
- Improved coping skills (self-report)



EveryStep's Additional Legislative Priorities

DIRECT CARE WORKFORCE DATASET

Establish a state-centralized direct care worker dataset to ensure accurate numbers of those working in direct care and/or continuing a career in health care and long-term services and support.



CONSISTENT MCO REQUIREMENTS

Require MCOs to provide consistent forms and requirements based on Iowa Medicaid Enterprise practices to reduce undue administrative burden for providers.



FUNDING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA (ECI)

Enhance funding to Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) so that local communities and state government can work together to improve the well-being of our youngest children.



ELIMINATE ROOM & BOARD PASS THROUGH

Eliminate the room & board pass through for hospice providers with patients living in nursing facilities.



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For more information, contact:

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