

Actively Moving Forward®: The Grief Sensitive Campus Initiative for Colleges and Universities

Statistics: 1 in 3 of college undergraduates are in the first year of grieving the death of a family member or friend, and nearly half are within 24 months.

Consequence: Without support, most of these students are at a disadvantage to their non-grieving peers and are at high risk for academic difficulties and lower GPA's and isolation due to social integration difficulties.

Response: Having served grieving college students for over ten years, Actively Moving Forward® has heard their call for support and more sensitivity to their grief on their campuses. In response to these startling statistics and to the needs communicated to us by grieving college students, we have developed the Grief Sensitive Campus Initiative. This Initiative provides education and support to Colleges and Universities to better support the needs of this significant portion of their student body.

The following outlines the key components of the Initiative:

Education and Training

Just as campuses offer suicide awareness, bullying, and other essential training to faculty, staff, and students, education and training on how to address best, the needs of grieving students is vital to a grieving young adult's success. Grief support training heightens sensitivity, promotes the healthy expression of grief, and educates faculty, staff, and students on supportive practices with grieving students on campus. The Actively Moving Forward® team provides the following training opportunities:

- **In-Person Training Seminars** – Training range from two-hour sessions to full day training for faculty, staff, or students seeking to understand how to support grieving students better.
- **Webinar Based Seminars** – These are one to two-hour live web-based training sessions that provide an overview of how to support grieving students best.

Policy and Protocol

Embedding best practices when it comes to grief support into the fabric of university practices is an essential part of having a grief sensitive campus. Best practices include the following elements:

- **Bereavement Leave Policy for Students** – Many institutions have bereavement leave policies in place for faculty and staff, but few have a policy in place for a student's leave. Our team can work with your campus to develop a policy that meets the needs of your students.
- **Notification Protocol** – After a student is notified of a death loss, most must reach out to each professor to negotiate their absences and missing assignments when they are already in a place of emotional distress. Students have reported that they receive a variety of responses and expectations from professors as well. A notification protocol is the procedure students would use to notify the university that a death has occurred. As part of the protocol, a department on campus and designated

faculty or staff members are identified to assist students with notifying their professors when a death is going to impact their attendance or ability to complete an assignment on time.

- **Grief Awareness Day** – This day represents your institutions' commitment to recognize and support the needs of its grieving students, as well as its faculty and staff members once a year campus-wide. This critical moment acknowledges one's grief and lends an opportunity for an open conversation. We have a protocol for these gatherings related to honoring and remember people who have impacted our lives in positive ways we can share with campuses.

Campus Support Services

Connecting with others who understand is a crucial component to feeling understood and supported.

- **AMF App Virtual Community** –The AMF App for Grieving Young Adults is a supportive community of grieving young adults nationwide. The App offers your students a way to connect and feel support in a way that's familiar to them, virtually and 24/7.
- **AMF Campus Chapter** – Spearheaded by a faculty member advocate, a campus chapter can be established to help students with engagement events and informal gatherings. Our team can provide information on the steps for developing a chapter on your campus.
- **College / University Counseling Services** – Many institutions have counseling services already in place for students, addressing their needs. AMF can offer additional training to these already established support systems specific to supporting grieving college students.
- **Grief Support Care Packets** – Our team can suggest ideas for putting together care packets for grieving students on your campus. These can be particularly helpful to a newly bereaved student returning to campus after bereavement leave.
- **Orientation** – Information included in an orientation package, which might consist of self-care items and information about whom to reach out to, should a student need support, should support be needed.
- **Grief Sensitive Campus Task Force** – This task force may include key campus stakeholders who will guide the implementation of the Grief Sensitive Campus Initiative activities on the college or university campus.
- **Consultation** – Members of the AMF team are available to meet in person or via video or conference call with key campus stakeholders as you make plans for a grief sensitive campus.*

Data Collection and Measurement

The final component of the Grief Sensitive Campus Initiative is to collect data and statistical information on bereaved college students and measure the impact of the support programs. Our plan will be to collect information gleaned from campus reporting on student engagement. We will also survey students participating in AMF supportive programming to determine the impact programs are having on the lives of participants.

*Our AMF team offers its knowledge free of charge, and there are no fees associated with our teams' availability to support key campus stakeholders. Incurred costs are for training, workshops or education, assessment analysis, policymaking, and creation of content.