

Media release
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New online tool helps caregivers support children in times of grief

OTTAWA, ON, November 21, 2017 – A new national initiative is helping parents, guardians and caregivers with a difficult challenge: having conversations with children about dying and death. Launching today, KidsGrief.ca online learning modules tackle these topics in a straightforward, practical way providing strategies and talking points to support parents.

When someone important to a child is dying or has died, families struggle with what to tell the children, when to share information and how to address tough subjects like should children be at the bedside of someone who is dying and cremation.

Developed by the Canadian Virtual Hospice with funding from the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) and Hope & Cope, the three interactive learning modules were written by grief experts, are parent approved and available free of charge. The heart and soul of the modules are the video clips of families sharing personal stories.

Often parents and other caregivers turn to health providers and educators for help in these situations. Now they have an accessible resource to which to refer parents.

CIRA invested \$36,000 through its Community Investment Program. Hope & Cope's En Famille program is providing \$25,000 for French versions.

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BACKGROUND

Topics on KidsGrief.ca, include:

- how children grieve;
- words, phrases and concepts to use and what to avoid;
- responding to difficult questions and concepts such as suicide, medical assistance in dying and cremation;
- preparing children for funerals, burials, and other ceremonies;
- “teachable moments” including pet death and talking about tragic world events;
- and how to support grieving children.

KidsGrief.ca builds on MyGrief.ca, an online resource for grieving adults launched by the Canadian Virtual Hospice in 2016, with funding by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. MyGrief.ca has received innovation awards from the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement and the Canadian Health Informatics Association.

The learning modules are available on Kidsgrief.ca.

QUOTES

“The death of someone a child cares about is one of the most significant events in their life. Yet there is little expert guidance available to adults on how to provide support,” said Andrea Warnick, a nationally recognized expert on children’s grief. “Withholding information doesn’t protect children – it leaves them feeling confused, afraid and many feel in some way responsible for the illness or death.”

“Prince Harry has been very open about the personal impacts of unsupported childhood grief. We know families struggle with what’s best for their child. These modules fill a huge gap for one of life’s most difficult situations,” said Shelly Cory, executive director of the Canadian Virtual Hospice. “We are grateful to CIRA and Hope and Cope for this investment in Canadian children and families.”

“CIRA is committed to building a better online Canada and part of that commitment is supporting the development of innovative online resources,” said David Fowler, vice president, marketing and communications at CIRA. “The internet helps organizations like the Canadian Virtual Hospice get their information out to many more people than they could otherwise reach. In this case what they are providing will help Canadian kids in a very impactful way.”

“As an organization dedicated to helping patients and their families at every age and every stage of cancer, Hope & Cope is very proud of our contribution to this innovative project. While it is true that grief itself has no language, it is often difficult to find the words that will help children, in particular, to express their grief. Thanks to KidsGrieve2, French-speaking parents across Canada now have access to free user-friendly and effective resources to help their children through this difficult process,” says Susanne O’Brien, executive director, Hope & Cope.

About the Canadian Virtual Hospice



Canadian Virtual Hospice is the most comprehensive online centre in the world on palliative and end of life care loss and grief. It provides information and support to more than 1.8 million people living with a life-limiting illness, their families, health providers, educators and researchers. Virtual Hospice operates VirtualHospice.ca Portailpalliatif.ca MyGrief.ca LivingMyCulture.ca and Methadone4Pain.ca.

About CIRA's Community Investment Program



CIRA is building a better online Canada through the Community Investment Program by funding innovative projects led by charities, not-for-profits and academic institutions that are making the internet better for all Canadians. CIRA is best known for our role managing the .CA domain on behalf of all Canadians. While this remains our primary mandate, as a member-based not-for-profit ourselves, we have a much broader goal to strengthen Canada's internet. The Community Investment Program is one of our most valuable contributions toward this goal and funds projects in digital literacy, online services, research and infrastructure. Every .CA domain name registered or renewed contributes to this program. To date CIRA has supported 100 projects with over \$4.2 million in contributions.

About Hope & Cope



Hope & Cope is a volunteer-based, professionally managed organization that provides support to cancer patients and their caregivers from two locations – its home base at the Jewish General Hospital's Segal Cancer Centre and at its freestanding Wellness Centre, which focuses on cancer wellness and recovery. Hope & Cope's comprehensive and innovative programs offer support, connection, information and practical resources to patients at every stage of cancer.