



# Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative Overview



## What it is

**The Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative (GSSI)** is part of New York Life's nationwide effort to better equip educators and other school personnel to care for the grieving students. Through the program, trained New York Life ambassadors connect with schools in their local communities to raise educators' awareness of the impact and prevalence of grief among school-age children, and to direct them to critical resources designed especially for education practitioners by the Coalition to Support Grieving Students. GSSI recognizes schools that commit to better support their grieving students by awarding them the "Grief-Sensitive School"



designation, which is accompanied by a grant to help them build a more robust culture of grief support and resiliency at their school.



## Why it exists

**Most educators and school professionals will encounter grief in the classroom firsthand.** An estimated one in 15 children will experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18\* and the majority experience some kind of close personal loss before graduating from high school. Grief's impact on children can be far-reaching, with potential to lead to serious behavioral issues and poor school performance when it goes unsupported.

A survey conducted by the New York Life Foundation in conjunction with the American Federation of Teachers revealed that only 7 percent of teachers had received training to support bereaved students, while a full 92 percent of educators felt that childhood grief was a serious problem deserving more attention from schools. In recent years, the tragedy of school shootings across the U.S. has only created additional urgency and concern around addressing issues of grief and death at school.



## New York Life's Commitment

As the largest corporate champion of childhood bereavement support over the past decade, the New York Life Foundation has committed to improving the ability of schools to reach their grieving students. In 2013, the Foundation partnered with the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement to convene the Coalition to Support Grieving Students, a collaboration among leading K-12 professional organizations to develop and deliver the best possible grief support resources to educators through its dedicated site, [grievingstudents.org](http://grievingstudents.org). The GSSI is an extension of the Coalition's work, serving to direct schools and districts to accessible grief resources to empower even more educators to support their students.



## How it works

**As a part of the program, New York Life trains interested and qualified agents and employees on how to support grieving students.** These GSSI ambassadors then connect with schools (which must be accredited K-12 public or private institutions) to offer a presentation on the issue of grief at school and direct educators to existing grief resources (including [grievingstudents.org](http://grievingstudents.org)) that can help them provide a more supportive environment for their students.

Participating schools are encouraged to make a commitment to strive to become more grief-sensitive; those that take this step receive New York Life's "Grief-Sensitive School" designation, as well as a \$500 grant to help enhance the grief support and resources available in their school community.



## For more information

Please contact [nylffoundation@newyorklife.com](mailto:nylffoundation@newyorklife.com).

Results from the Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model (CBEM) developed by Judi's House/JAG Institute [www.judishouse.org/CBEM](http://www.judishouse.org/CBEM)

