

# You have just lost a child...

Information for parents



The loss of a child is the hardest challenge that a family can face. It is difficult for us to find the words to express our empathy for the suffering that you are experiencing.

It is normal that you may feel a sense of despair as you endure this senseless loss of your child. It is essential not to minimize the importance of the support of your loved ones or the professional help that you may wish to seek over the coming months.

Grief is a unique and complex process that cannot be described as a series of regular steps forward to a defined goal. Adapting to the loss of a loved one can lead to different reactions, different emotions, and each person will have their own needs to be met.

## **Impact on the family**

### ***The couple***

This loss is a major source of stress for any couple. You may feel tension and even experience conflict within your relationship. Realize that it is normal for men and women to react differently to this loss. Men often tend to channel their emotions through sports/physical activity, through work, or in solitude, while women more often express the need to talk, to cry and to be supported by others. Try to be aware of and respect your differences, and try to share with each other what you are feeling.

### ***Your other children***

It is recommended to be honest with your other children, as soon as possible when a child has died or is dying. When you tell them the news, be careful to use simple and straightforward language, leaving no room for ambiguity, at a level that they can understand. You should reassure them and tell them that although you are very sad, nothing that has happened is their fault, and that you love them as much as ever. Do not hesitate to consult with a professional to help you find the right words to use for your children. There are also several books which can help guide you in how to tell the story that best describes what happened to their sibling.

### ***Your entourage***

Those who are close to you may also be affected by your loss. It is possible to have the impression that they are indifferent or unfeeling. You should know that some people will avoid addressing the issue, because they are uncomfortable talking about death and may be concerned about adding to your distress. Others will try to lighten your mood, but they may not necessarily use the right words to do so. It is important to not isolate yourself with your grief, but you should choose to share your feelings with those you trust and with whom you feel listened to and respected.

## Steps to be taken following a death

- The first step is to communicate with a funeral home of your choice. They will communicate with the hospital regarding the transport of your child's body to their facility.
- The death declaration will be given to you by the funeral director. This document is required for the other steps to be taken with various government agencies and in order to obtain an official death certificate. The funeral home will help guide you through these steps.
- In order to obtain the death certificate, you should contact the Directeur de l'état civil : [www.riq.qc.ca/etatcivil](http://www.riq.qc.ca/etatcivil)

### Montréal

2050, rue Bleury- 6e étage  
Montréal (Québec) H3A 2T5  
(Métro : Place des Arts)  
514-864-3900 or 1-800-567-3900

### Québec

205, rue Montmagny  
Québec (Québec) G1N 2Z9  
418-643-3900 or 1-800-567-3900

- These documents are required in order to cancel the provincial and federal family allowances. Some funeral homes will take care of this for you.
- If you are currently on maternity or parental leave, you must communicate with the Régime québécois d'assurance parental : 1-888-610-7727 [rqap.gouv.qc.ca](http://rqap.gouv.qc.ca)
- For specific bereavement or other leave, make inquiries with your employer.

## Resources

### *Info-Social-8-1-1*

The 8-1-1 line allows you to contact rapidly a professional in psychosocial intervention in the case of a psychosocial problem. The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The professionals of Info-Social 811 offer advice and can respond to questions regarding psychosocial issues. They can also, as needed, refer you to an appropriate resource in the health care or social services sector, or a community resource.

### *CHU Sainte-Justine Web site*

The Info-famille guide that is on the site provides information for families regarding community organizations, publications, and Internet resources.

Go to the following address : [www.chusj.org](http://www.chusj.org)

Choose the section « Enseignement » (in green) from the menu at the top of the opening page; choose the section « Bibliothèques » under the title; click on « Guide Info-famille » in the column on the right; then research by first letter (ex. « d » for « deuil »). All of the resources in this section are in French.

### *Centre for Suicide Prevention*

An interventional service available 24 hours/24 and 7 days/7. Without cost and confidential, this service is available to people who are thinking about suicide, those who are concerned for a person in their entourage and for those who have lost a loved one to suicide.

[www.cpsmontreal.ca](http://www.cpsmontreal.ca)

Telephone : 1-866-APPELLE (1-866-277-3553)

Textto : 535353

Chat : [suicide.ca](http://suicide.ca)

## Useful information for parents

### *For insurance purposes*

Send the form to be completed to the attention of :

Dr. \_\_\_\_\_

At : CHU Sainte-Justine  
3175, chemin de la Côte Sainte-Catherine  
Montréal (Québec) H3T 1C5

### *In the case of a death due to a road accident*

Communicate with the Société de l'Assurance Automobile du Québec (SAAQ) :

Montréal : 514 873-7620

Québec : 1 819 643-7620

Elsewhere in Québec : 1-800-361-7620 (toll-free)

### *To obtain the autopsy report*

Contact the Secrétariat des archives (Medical records office) of CHU Sainte-Justine at 514-345-4931, extension 2744.

Do not hesitate to contact our team if necessary.

514-345-4931, extension \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

## **CHU Sainte-Justine**

3175, chemin de la Côte-Sainte-Catherine

Montréal (Québec) H3T 1C5

Téléphone : 514 345-4931

[chusj.org](http://chusj.org)

### **Written by**

Samira Harakat, senior advisor, critical care  
Myriam Larivière, social worker, intensive care

### **In collaboration with**

Dr Janie Benoit  
Dr Elise Dubuc  
Dr Suzy Gascon  
Anne-Marie Morand  
AIC Outpatient Clinics for Obstetrics and Gynecology

### **Reviewed by**

Samira Harakat, M.Sc., Nursing consultant, DSI, CHU Sainte-Justine  
Myriam Larivière, Social worker, Pediatric Intensive Care, CHU Sainte-Justine

### **Validated by**

Committee on Client Documentation

### **Printed by**

Imprimerie du CHU Sainte-Justine  
© CHU Sainte-Justine

F-1233A GRM : 30009908 (Avril 2025)