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Recruitment and Retention of Childhood Bereavement Center Facilitators

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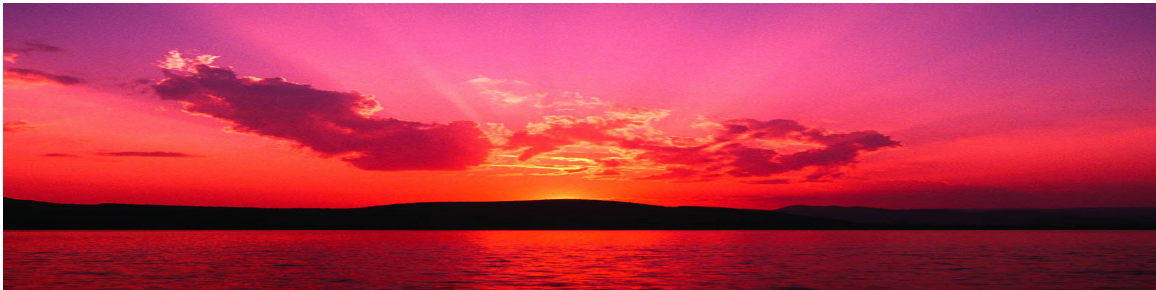
Recruitment and Retention of Childhood Bereavement Center Facilitators

**Katherine A. Guilfoyle
Carolyn C. Hames**

FriendsWay

Families Reaching Into Each New Day

- HPR 319 Impact of Death on Behavior
- HPR 119 Loss in the Lives of Children and Adolescents
Thanatology: the study of death and dying



Research Purpose

To learn about childhood bereavement center facilitators:

- * What qualities they share
- * Why they volunteer their time to this cause
- * Their opinions on recruitment and retention

Goals for Research

- * **Reach facilitators from various places and walks of life**
 - * **Find answers to my questions**
- * **Find parallels between facilitators' answers**
 - * **Relay findings to bereavement centers**
- * **Present at the 11th Annual National Symposium on Children's Grief**

Methods

Developed survey with 7 questions

Contacted center facilitators, then sent packets to volunteers

Surveys were anonymous, and answers were organized by question in database

(Kquilfoyle@mail.uri.edu) or Carolyn Hames by telephone (401-874-5330) or email (CHames@uri.edu). In addition, you may contact the Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies, Research and Outreach, 70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island, 02881, telephone (401-874-4328). You have read the consent form. Your questions have been answered. Your signature on this form means that you understand the information and you agree to participate in this study.

_____ Signature of Participant	_____ Signature of Researcher
_____ Typed/Printed Name	_____ Typed/Printed Name
_____ Date	_____ Date

Question 1: How long have you been a childhood bereavement center facilitator?

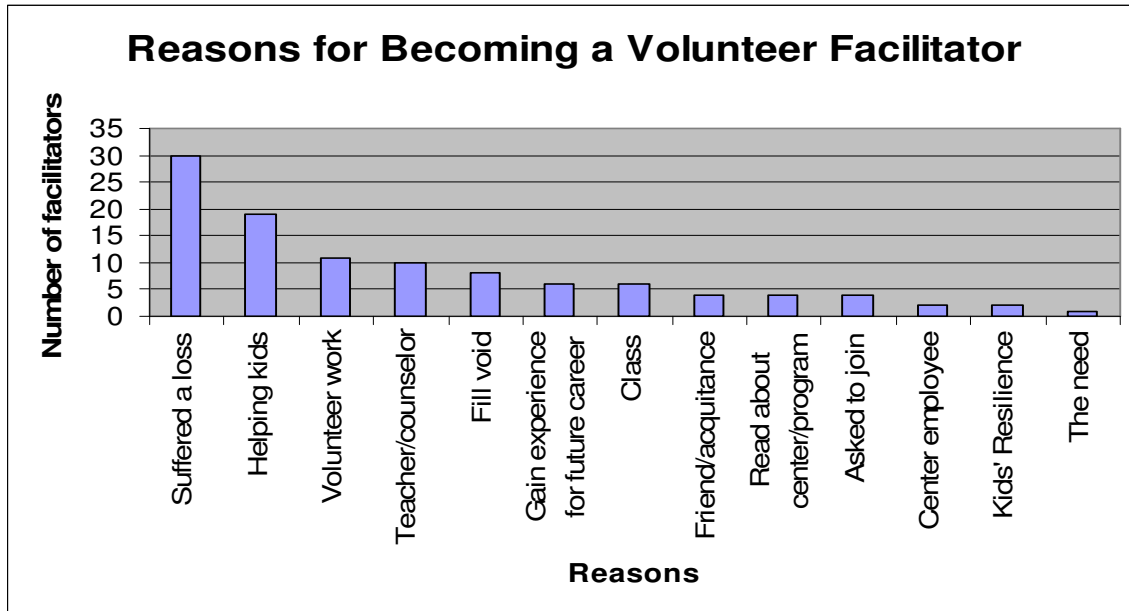
Average: 3.32 years
Range: 1 day- 16+ years



Question 2: Please describe the training process you underwent to become a facilitator.

10. Discussing group facilitation-9
9. Visit to funeral home/training by funeral home professionals- 9
8. Discussing childhood development- 10
7. Training with professionals- 10
6. Discussing stages of grief in children- 11
5. Role playing/"mock groups" - 12
4. Training by the bereavement center leaders- 14
3. Lectures (by professionals, funeral home directors, guest speakers)- 14
2. Exploration of/working through personal grief experiences- 15
1. Interactive discussion of death & the grief process- 25

Question 3: Why did you decide to become a childhood bereavement Center facilitator?



Question 4: What rewards has this experience shown you that have made you work as a facilitator for as long as you have?

● **Seeing the transition in kids & families from first night to closing-**
37

"Very rewarding to see people have a spark in their eyes again when they're ready to leave that wasn't there when they started."

"Assures that what we do does matter in our lives and in the precious lives of those who come for help with their grief journey.
I see the best side of humanity and it gives me hope."

"Love to see the progress that the children make from the first evening to the end of the 14 week sessions. We provided a safe place for children to talk, cry and even laugh once again."

Other Rewards

- Fulfilling- 7**
- Gain skills for my own grief journey- 8**
- Friendships with other facilitators- 11**
- Learned- 4**
- To give is to receive- 5**
- Chance to spend time with kids- 3**
- Seeing that what we do matters- 9**
- Privilege of being trusted with such personal experiences- 5**
- Amazed by kids' resilience- 7**
- Gives hope/inspiration- 7**
- Emotions are exercised and strengthened- 3**
- Unconditional love from children- 4**
- Personal growth- 4**
- Support from leaders- 5**
- Seeing compassion kids show others who are new or struggling- 6**
- Participants' appreciation for my help- 6**

Question 5: What qualities do you feel you possess that make you a good facilitator or that you share with other facilitators?

Empathy, understanding & ability to put yourself in their shoes through experiences- 38
Good listening skills- 32
Compassionate, caring, mercy- 26
Experience with kids/can easily relate to them/ love kids- 20
Patience- 11
Love people- 9
Sense of humor/fun- 8
Flexibility/openness to understand and accept others' perspectives, ideas & attitudes- 7
Able to ask right questions to guide topics/discussions in beneficial, age-appropriate manner-7
Commitment/availability- 5
Good communication/people skills- 4
Nonjudgmental/accepting- 4

Prayer/faith/willingness to let God work- 4
Sympathy & sincerity- 4
Ability to hear beyond what children say & do/intuition- 4
Approachable- 3
Creativity for activities- 4
Optimism & hope- 3
Wonder/interest in healing process- 2
Allow kids to feel & experience their pain- 2
Accepting that there's not always a right or wrong answer- 2
Willingness to keep confidentiality- 2
Selflessness- 1
Openness- 1
Energy- 2
Took a thanatology course- 1
Trustworthy- 1
Sensitive- 2
Being present for the kids- 2

Long list!



Question 6: What would be required to make you want to continue your work as a facilitator for twice as long as you've been volunteering? For three times as long? (How could your center make you want to stay?)

"I think so much of wanting to do this work comes from within- just support and feeling appreciated from time to time, nothing big- just a "thank you" "

Showing appreciation- 15

"Support from staff and other facilitators is fabulous, sharing ideas (and frustrations sometimes!) It would be hard to continue without that reassurance of being part of a team"

Feeling of family or team with other facilitators- 8

"Would love to attend a seminar or conference which targets childhood/grief issues. Very curious about the benefits of art therapy. Anything which might serve to deepen my knowledge base would be welcome"

More education/learning opportunities- 7

"Important for them to remember we are Volunteers and our time and energy is not mandatory, constructive criticism appreciated when delivered in a caring manner."

Feedback/communication on competency- 6

Question 7: What do you think is the best way childhood bereavement centers can recruit facilitators who will want to volunteer long-term?

- ✓ **Recruit those who've gone through center's program**
- ✓ **Recruit those in education, social work, church, volunteering & grief**
- ✓ **Inform public of the need & what center does**
- ✓ **Offer education opportunities**

"Improve awareness of the center and what they do. There is an impression that it is too sad and all you do is cry with the kids, which is not true. They are a good facilitator. In speaking with others about the program they consider the job more seriously and stay longer the commitment when made. An invitation would make the possible facilitator feel special and they would always tend to make me out as someone special while saying that "they wish that they had the ability to serve" "

Met Goals!

Received responses from 73 volunteer facilitators from Australia, Canada, Washington, Texas, Florida, New York and Rhode Island. Different ages and levels of experience.

Found many similarities in the answers given by facilitators even though the questions were short answer!

The future:

Distributing findings of study to childhood bereavement centers so they can increase their recruitment and retention of volunteer facilitators, using the ideas of experienced volunteers!

Best of all...

The study was chosen for presentation at the
11th Annual National Symposium for Children's Grief Support

We're going to Alabama!!!



11th National Symposium of
Children's Grief Support

JUNE 2007
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

University of Rhode Island Honors Program

Wakefield, Narragansett and Kingston...and Rock Hill, SC Post Offices

Lighthouse for New Hope: Mesquite, Texas & Nancy Bollman

Bridges: Tacoma, Washington & Bev Hatter

Hospice of CNY: Liverpool, New York & Laura Harting

The Warm Place: Fort Worth, Texas & Donna Uselding

A Friends Place Bereavement Care Centre: Terrigal, Australia & Mal McKissock

Friends Way: Warwick, Rhode Island & Laurie Fitzgerald, Sam McGregor

Canuck Place Children's Hospice: Vancouver, BC Canada & Peggy Reidy

Children's Bereavement Center, South Miami, Florida & Carol Berns

Rick McIntyre, for his support and email reminders

Deborah Gardiner, for her support, reminders, answers, smiles, snacks and coffee

The family of Eric F. Kumpf for the Memorial Humanities Honor Student
Endowment

... and last but not least

A thousand thanks to Professor Carolyn C. Hames!

