



Checklist

Bereavement Care

- ☐ Are you aware of the range and scope of bereavement support and counselling available within your hospital, in the community and online? Consider how these resources could be collected and made accessible to all staff.

- ☐ Are you comfortable in talking to and supporting family and friends in their initial grief immediately following a death? If not, where can you obtain further support and/or education?

- ☐ Tell your colleagues about the End-of-Life Essentials education modules and Toolkit. Add bereavement care issues to your team meeting agenda. Make a training request via your supervisor, or via your organisation's training manager, for specific workplace training on bereavement care as an ongoing consideration.

- ☐ Do you work with specific populations such as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples, or in specific settings such as paediatrics, who may have specialised bereavement needs? Have you researched organisations that could further upskill you and your colleagues in this area?

- ☐ Does the patient have an Advance Care Plan in place? Check on admission and make sure that it is transferred with the patient. If no ACP has been developed, be proactive in starting the conversation.

- ☐ Read this information from Advance Care Planning Australia: Starting the conversation. <https://www.advancecareplanning.org.au/understand-advance-care-planning/starting-the-conversation>

- ☐ Are you aware of the processes in your hospital for post death care? Are you able to confidently tell family/friends of the person who has died about the timing, procedures and expectations following a death. What is the process for moving a body to the morgue? How long can family remain in the room with the person who has died?



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- ☐ Ask the family if they would like to see a priest, minister, imam, rabbi, or other faith-based support. Be mindful that religion is not the same as spirituality. Discuss how a patient's spiritual beliefs might impact upon care once the person has died. Support the wishes of families and carers who want to include religious or cultural practices once the person dies. This may include ceremonies, prayer, or cleansing rituals with the body.

- ☐ If you have had experience in bereavement care, are you able to act as a mentor for inexperienced staff?

- ☐ Consider holding regular team debriefing meetings where you can discuss deaths and follow up care needs for family and friends. You may want to do this after a particularly challenging death or perhaps at the end of a shift. Sometimes informal support is helpful but sometimes more formalised support is needed such as via Employee Assistance Programs.

- ☐ Are you able to identify family and friends who may be at risk of more complicated grief? Is there a process for following up or referring to specialist bereavement services?

- ☐ Explore your own experience of dealing with loss and bereavement. Support options might include the Employee Assistance Scheme, talking to your GP or a trusted colleague.

- ☐ Actively practice self-care. Do you have any self-care practices? See <https://www.caresearch.com.au/Health-Professionals/Nurses/Personal-Development/Self-Care>

For resources go to the My Toolkit pages in End-of-Life Essentials website:
<https://www.endoflifeessentials.com.au/>

Resources

Bereavement Care

Brochures or resource packs

Do you have a brochure of other collated materials that can be given to bereaved family and friends to guide them? If yes, review the materials.

- Make sure they are up to date.
- Make sure they are user friendly, simple to understand with clear instructions on how to access the services.

If no, there may be scope for you or other members of your team to begin working on such a resource. Think about who might be included.

Producing a local bereavement resource pack

Review any resources/bereavement packs that your hospital/organisation already has.

- How useful are the resources?
- Who knows about them?
- Are they routinely given to all people who have a family member/friend die?
- Are they up to date?
- Who oversees the maintenance/development of the information?

A useful example of a bereavement information resource was produced by St Vincent's (2017): [When someone you care about dies in hospital](#).

Videos

In this video, Brigid Russell talks about her husband Jim's death and how it feels to live with grief and bereavement.

NHS Education for Scotland (2024). [The value of listening: a life shared](#).

The following video gives a succinct overview of grief, loss and bereavement by Professor Liz Lobb, Professor of Palliative Care.

Liz Lobb (2022). [Loss, grief, and bereavement](#) (27.54 mins).

Documents to guide services

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (now called Grief Australia) and Palliative Care Australia (2018) [Policy Statement: Grief and Bereavement](#).

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare (2023) [Essential elements for safe and high quality end of life care National Consensus Statement](#). See in particular Guiding Principle 9.

Palliative Care Australia (2018) [National Palliative Care Standards 5th edition](#). See information around Standard 6 - Families and carers have access to bereavement support services and are provided with information about loss and grief

Further Reading

Bond D, Raynes-Greenow C, Gordon A. Bereaved parents' experience of care and follow-up after stillbirth in Sydney hospitals. (2018). Australian & New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, 58(2):185–191. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajog.12684>

Coombs, M., Mitchell, M., James, S. and Wetzig, K. (2017). Intensive care bereavement practices across New Zealand and Australian intensive care units: a qualitative content analysis. J Clin Nurs, 26:2944-2952. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.13624>

Cooper, J., Stock, R, & Wilson, J. (2020). Emergency Department Grief Support: A Multidisciplinary Intervention to Provide bereavement Support After death in the Emergency Department. Journal of Emergency Medicine, 58(1):141-147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jemermed.2019.09.034>

Grant, M, Hudson, P, Forrest, A, Collins, A, & Israel, F. 2021. Developing a model of bereavement care in an adult tertiary hospital. Australian Health Review, 45(1):110-116. [doi: 10.1071/AH19270](https://doi.org/10.1071/AH19270).

Meller N, Parker D, Hatcher D, Sheehan A. (2019). Grief experiences of nurses after the death of an adult patient in an acute hospital setting: An integrative review of literature. Collegian, 26(2), 302-310. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.colegn.2018.07.011>

Raymond A, Lee SF, & Bloomer MJ. (2017). Understanding the bereavement care roles of nurses within acute care: a systematic review. Journal of Clinical Nursing, 26(13–14):1787–1800. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.13503>