

Dear Family,

It is with great sadness that we extend our sincere sympathy to you at this incredibly painful time.

While grieving the loss of your precious child, it is common to have many questions, and you will also need to make several decisions.

You will receive a lot of information from various professionals over the next several days. During this difficult time, you may feel overwhelmed and forget much of what is said.

Grieving can be lonely and frightening, but it is important for you to know you don't have to do this alone. There are resources available to help you.

Please do not hesitate to contact us, we can help you on your grief journey.

Sincerely,

The staff of the Infant Death Center

Moving forward

You may feel alone as you begin to make your way on your grief journey.

Our newsletter, *Healing Hearts*, is offered three times per year and provides inspiration and support for all of those who experienced the loss of a child.

Sign up for the newsletter by visiting chawisconsin.org/news/newsletter-signup

If you have any questions, concerns, or simply need somebody to talk to, please contact the Infant Death Center Project Coordinator Joanna O'Donnell. Joanna can be reached at (414) 337-4571 or jodonnell@chw.org.



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Help for the Journey

Information to support you after the death of a child



www.chawisconsin.org

Grief

Your grief is a normal and natural reaction to the death of your precious child; it is the price of love. Grief comes with many conflicting emotions, and getting through it is not easy.

The range of emotions you may feel are:

- Anger
- Confusion
- Disbelief
- Guilt
- Horror
- Rage
- Relief
- Sadness
- Shock

These emotions may make it hard to function but it is important to confront them head on to begin a healthy path through your grief. It may be difficult to eat, sleep, think or care about anyone or anything; but remember, this is normal.

Losing a child is one of life's most devastating and painful experiences.

Grieving is a long, difficult process that impacts everybody differently. There is no way around it, only through it. Trusting and taking care of yourself is important during the difficult times ahead.

Most of all, be patient with yourself.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

Investigation and autopsy

Why is there an investigation?

A death-scene investigation is standard in determining cause of death. The investigation is needed to define the circumstances surrounding the death. This may include removal of certain items for testing.

Why is an autopsy important?

Wisconsin requires an autopsy when a child younger than age 2 dies suddenly and unexpectedly. An autopsy is necessary for the pathologist to determine cause of death and identify congenital and/or genetic conditions. This information may be helpful in preventing future deaths.

What is an autopsy?

An autopsy is the careful examination of organs for causes and/or factors that may have contributed to your child's death. An autopsy is done with sensitivity and care. Nothing is done during the autopsy that will prevent or complicate a funeral or viewing of the body.

It may take several weeks for all of the laboratory tests to be completed. A written report will then be available to you. The autopsy is performed at no cost to the family.



Roles

Investigator/police officer

The primary role of the investigator is to be an advocate, or supporter, for the deceased child. He or she must maintain an unbiased approach in investigating the cause and manner of death.

Coroner/medical examiner

All Wisconsin counties have a coroner or medical examiner. These individuals become involved in the investigation of deaths that are sudden or unexpected.

The coroner or medical examiner can explain what an autopsy is and help you understand the autopsy report when it is completed.

Pathologist

A pathologist is the physician who performs the autopsy and prepares a report of the findings.

Funeral director

A funeral director will have to be chosen and will offer you a variety of options, including the opportunity to spend time with your child prior to the service. You may want to do something in memory of your child, either public or private.

Remember, the final decisions are yours.