



# Practice Points

## *Cultural Guidelines for Working with Families Who Have Experienced Sudden and Unexpected Death*

### Tips Guide

Culture refers to a pattern of thought, attitudes, and values used for meeting human needs and solving problems. Though an inevitable experience shared among us all, grief and loss may be expressed differently across cultures. As helping professionals involved with families and children of diverse cultures, we can improve our practice by increasing awareness and sensitivity to the beliefs and customs of varied cultural groups.

The Missouri Department of Mental Health and the University of Missouri Terrorism and Disaster Center developed a tips guide providing practical cultural guidelines for working with families who have experienced grief and loss: *Cultural Guidelines for Working with Families Who Have Experienced Sudden and Unexpected Death*. The guide highlights the most prevalent cultural and religious groups in Missouri and illustrates how cultural and religious beliefs and customs may differ with respect to loss and death. Also provided is general information about family dynamics and beliefs commonly shared by these cultural groups. Staff are encouraged to utilize this guide to ensure sensitivity to individual cultural and religious beliefs and customs of the families we serve.

The tip guide has been added to the Child Welfare Manual as a resource in [Section 7 Chapter 23: Working with Culturally Diverse Families](#), or it can be found at:

Terrorism and Disaster Center, University of Missouri  
website: [http://tdc.missouri.edu/doc/culture\\_guide\\_unexpected\\_death.pdf](http://tdc.missouri.edu/doc/culture_guide_unexpected_death.pdf)

Missouri Department of Mental Health  
website: <http://dmh.mo.gov/docs/diroffice/disaster/culturalguidelines.pdf>

Program Development Specialist Contact:  
Lori Masek [Lori.Masek@dss.mo.gov](mailto:Lori.Masek@dss.mo.gov)

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