WHY THIS MATTERS
From deaths of loved ones to loss of rituals and routines, children and youth have experienced many types of loss during the pandemic. Attending to a young person’s grief helps them heal and become healthier and resilient moving forward.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS
As of December 2021, an estimated 167,000 U.S. children had lost either a parent or a caretaking grandparent to COVID-19, with rates highest among children of color. Many more have seen a parent, grandparent, or other loved one become seriously ill or become debilitated by acute or “long COVID.”

In a small national survey, two-thirds of high school teachers or staff expected student bereavement to have an impact on learning this school year. At the same time, almost half of the teachers or staff surveyed (44%) said their school was “extremely prepared” to help students deal with grief due to loss of a loved one, and 84% were at least “somewhat prepared.”

WHAT’S HAPPENING IN WISCONSIN?
Fortunately, based on the most recent state estimates (through June 2021), Wisconsin has one of the lowest rates of COVID-19 orphanhood in the nation.

Nevertheless, as of June 2021, an estimated 1,098 Wisconsin young people had lost a parent or caretaking grandparent to COVID-19.

No racial or ethnic group has been free of such losses. Most of the children who have lost a caregiver in Wisconsin are White (60%), because most of Wisconsin’s children are White. But Wisconsin’s children of color have lost caregivers at disproportionately high rates.

LOSS OF PRIMARY CAREGIVER PER 100,000 CHILDREN

- 0 - 100
- 101 - 200
- 201 - 325

NM (HIGHEST)
WI
NH & HI (LOWEST)
OTHER FORMS OF GRIEF OR LOSS

Most Wisconsin children have not had to cope with the monumental loss of a parent or caregiving grandparent. Nearly all children, however, have had other reasons to experience some form of grief or loss during the pandemic. This can include loss of routine, rituals, social connections, and a sense of physical or economic safety.

Research from other pandemics and disasters shows that even children who do not experience a close death may become overwhelmed if the situation leads them to have unaddressed feelings of powerlessness, social stigma, and disconnection. That’s why it’s important for adults to recognize signs of this type of distress in children and young people, even if those signs look very different for children than for adults, or if adults don’t think children are very aware of losses around them.4

From the outside, experiences of grief and/or trauma don’t always look like sadness. They can also look like inattentiveness, acting out, physical symptoms such as stomach aches, or refusal to go to places or engage in activities that trigger the grief.5

COMPARED TO WHITE CHILDREN OTHER WISCONSIN CHILDREN ARE 1.3 - 4.9 TIMES AS LIKELY TO HAVE LOST A CAREGIVER TO COVID-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Likelihood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES:

3 Hillis et al 2021.
8 Treglia et al. (See endnote 1).