

Fact Sheet:



When There Is a Death Or Serious Illness In Your Chapter

~ Member, Spouse or Child ~

How a Chapter Can Help:

There are many ways a chapter can offer support and assistance if a member, spouse or child passes away or if there is a long-term serious illness. Below are some ideas from chapters that have dealt with this:

1. Put someone in charge of arranging meals for the family. If appropriate, the chapter might help that mom arrange enough volunteers to supply the family's dinner every day (or at least every other day) for a month or longer. If you have a very small chapter, try to arrange meals for at least a week or as long as you can.
2. Set up a nursery at the funeral and reception after the funeral.
3. Help with the reception after the funeral, including organizing the whole reception if the family needs that help. If the mother isn't a member of a church in your community, perhaps one of your other members belongs to a church that will offer their hall for the reception. Members can bring food, flowers for the tables and act as hostess for the family.
4. Your chapter may start a trust fund for the children, if it was a parent that died. Work through a local bank if your chapter decides to do this for the family's children.
5. Your chapter can also organize fundraisers or a fund-me type site to help the family, if the family needs help with emergency expenses. Be sure you have the family's permission first.
6. If it was a child who died, the chapter might plant a tree or garden dedicated to the child's memory at a favorite park.
7. Create a memorial fund in the child's name to accept donations – say, for books for the children's library. Install a plaque with the child's name.
8. If it was a spouse or a child who died, be sure to invite the member to your chapter's activities. Call her to see when you can pick her up, then if she consents, go and get her. She might not have the emotional energy to go on her own.

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9. If it was her only child who died, she may not be emotionally ready to be around children again. Understand if she declines your offers, but if she has other children who normally came to MOMS Club activities, encourage her to come with those children and make it easy for her to come by offering to pick her and her children up on your way to the activity. Have various people call to offer rides and help getting to activities so it doesn't always fall on one or two people (unless they want to help in this way).
10. Continue to be there when she needs you. She may well need your chapter's support more in the weeks and months after the funeral, when the numbness wears off and the real grieving begins.
11. Consider having a speaker at your meeting to talk about grief counseling and/or whatever was the cause of this particular death (child safety, husband health, suicides, etc.). This is for all your members, *not* the mom who just lost a husband or child. She probably won't come to the meeting, but all your members will be shocked and grieving for the loss of one of their MOMS Club family, and a speaker can help them cope with that.
12. If the death has caused a devastating financial emergency for the mother or family, ask for a grant from the Mother-To-Mother Fund®. The M2M Fund was set up by the International MOMS Club to help with devastating financial emergencies due to personal or natural disasters. *(Although we realize any death is a devastating emotional emergency, a death in the family may not mean there is a devastating financial emergency – we can only help with devastating financial emergencies.)*
13. If someone is injured, and the family needs to go back and forth to the hospital often, consider giving gas cards or money for hospital parking.
14. Offer to babysit or entertain the other children while the mother or family is at the hospital, or if they are too busy or distraught. If the younger children do not want to be separate from their siblings or parents, then a collection of items to keep them busy can help – a collection of coloring books, crayons, activity books, small toys, puzzles, travel games, etc.
15. If an injured child has to stay in the hospital for an extended time, a goodie bag of the same kind of items can make the stay less boring.
16. Offer to run errands. The parents may not be able to think about going to the grocery or drugstore at times like these.
17. It can be overwhelming for a family suffering a loss if a lot of people want to contact the family or send cards to express their condolences. Appoint one member who is close to the mom to collect the cards and give them to the mom in a basket to open when she is ready.
18. The Mother-To-Mother Fund cannot help with trust funds, but any other special needs can be considered. Assistance from the Mother-To-Mother Fund can only be considered in addition to any financial help from the chapter, *not* in place of chapter help. For information on qualifications for M2M Fund help, contact the volunteer MOMS Club Coordinator who is assigned to help your chapter.

How an Individual Can Help:

1. Go to the funeral. *This is very important.*
2. Send her a card or note. It will matter to her. (Send a card from the chapter, but also send individual cards, too – see #17 above.)



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3. Say, "I'm sorry," and cry with her.
4. Let her talk, and talk, and talk, and talk.
5. Hold her hand and say nothing.
6. Be there for her in a month. (And in a year.)
7. Don't avoid talking with her about her child or husband. Bring up good memories and stories about them. (Leave bad memories silent...) Don't worry that if you mention these good memories that it will remind her of her husband or child. They are never out of her mind. You won't remind her – you'll be letting her talk and know they aren't forgotten.
8. If it was the mother who died, collect pictures of her and her children from all the members and family, and create memory books for each of her children.
9. Take coffee over and ask, "Shall I stay?" Be prepared for either a yes or a no.
10. If you pray, pray for her. If prayer is important to her, let her know you're praying for her.
11. Get her in touch with a support group. Take her when she is ready to go.
12. If she needs social services, find out what is available in your area. Make the first calls for her to find out what services she might be eligible for. Help her make appointments with the agencies and go with her. Take notes for her and ask questions for her, if she needs the help.
13. If the family lost a child, let the husband know that you are hurting for him, too. If your husband is friends with her husband, encourage him to be there for the dad.
14. Don't focus on how *you* feel. Focus on how she and her husband feel.
15. Don't expect thanks. Even if she doesn't seem to "appreciate" your help, understand that she does appreciate it on the deepest level.

