Talking with Children and Teens About Suicide and Violent Deaths

3-6 Year Olds
- Suicide: They made their body stop working.
- Homicide: Someone hurt his body so bad that his body stopped working and he died.
- How To Help: Play, physical activity, creative outlets, maintain routines and structure, reassure them that they are safe and loved.
- Normal Grief Responses: Regressive behaviors, repetitive questions/play, crying, clinginess, increase in fears, acting out behaviors, unsure about finality of death.

7-11 Year Olds
- Suicide: Your person caused their own death. This is called suicide.
- Homicide: Someone killed your dad. He is no longer living.
- How To Help: Play, physical activity, creative outlets, maintain routines and structure, answer questions truthfully, address issues around fears and safety, validate their experience without judgement.
- Normal Grief Responses: Crying, shocked, confused, scared, angry, sad, acting out, regression, isolation, declining grades, curious, can feel stigma, is clear about finality of death.

12-17 Year Olds
- Suicide: They died by suicide or, he killed himself.
- Homicide: She was murdered.
- How To Help: Give them space, connect them with peers who have experienced a death, maintain routines, disclose details when asked, be a good role model, ask them what they need.
- Normal Grief Responses: Angry, confused, scared, acting out, promiscuous behaviors, isolation, tearful, declining grades, can feel stigma, depressive like symptoms, changes in sleeping, eating, and mood.