

**Action needed to address COVID-19's hidden tragedy**  
***National Grief Advocates Urge Support for Grieving Canadians & Health Workers***

May 12, 2020 – Never in our lifetimes has Canada experienced the volume and complexity of grief as has resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. Canadians have been robbed of goodbyes with dying relatives and forced to grieve in isolation without funeral rites. They and those working on the front lines of health care are at heightened risk for prolonged, complicated grief marked by depression, and the risk of suicide. Existing grief services are fragmented, under-funded and insufficient. Left unaddressed, significant long-term social, health and economic impacts will result.

The Canadian Grief Alliance – a coalition of national leaders in grief and bereavement - is urging the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories to bolster the country's grief services to meet the growing demand. Existing and recently announced mental health initiatives do not include grief services.

“This is the hidden tragedy in the current crisis, but one that will also have long term implications for many individual Canadians as well as our health care systems and the economy” said Paul Adams, spokesperson for the Alliance. “Many people are now facing the deaths of loved ones, isolated from networks of family and friends that normally help people get through such heart-wrenching moments in their lives. Unless we step up and help people now, we will be dealing with the human toll for many years to come.”

The Alliance is asking the Federal Government to invest \$100 million in grief supports over the next three years and \$10 million in research. It is committed to working with governments to ensure the necessary supports are in place to help Canadians to heal. The Canadian Grief Alliance's priorities include:

- Investing in and expanding existing free grief services and resources that provide direct assistance to those grieving during and after the pandemic, with tailored resources for Indigenous Peoples, children and youth, seniors and other populations with specific needs.
- Access to specialized grief supports for front-line healthcare workers and first responders suffering grief-related work trauma.
- A public awareness campaign to increase understanding of grief, healthy coping strategies and existing resources like MyGrief.ca and KidsGrief.ca.
- Investing in a National Grief Strategy, to be completed in 5 months, to focus investment to maximize access to supports.
- Rapidly scaling up research capacity to better equip health providers, communities and the country to better respond to the evolving, long-term grief and bereavement needs.

The Alliance includes front-line providers – psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and therapists – as well as academics and organizations providing grief services from across Canada. The group is convened by the Canadian Virtual Hospice ([virtualhospice.ca](http://virtualhospice.ca)), an internationally recognized charitable organization that serves 2.1 million users annually.

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