

Loss and Grief: Statement of Rights and Needs of Deceased Multiple-Birth Infant(s) and Their Grieving Parents

Bereaved parents, their deceased infant(s), as well as any co-multiple survivor(s), have certain rights and dignities to which each is entitled, not only at the time of death but also in the days, weeks and months following loss. The following encapsulates those rights and needs.

Rights of the Deceased Infant(s)

- to be acknowledged by name and sex
- to be acknowledged as part of or as twins, triplets, quadruplets or more
- to be treated with respect and dignity
- to be with the grieving family whenever, and as long as is possible
- to be recognized as a person(s) who has lived and who has died
- to be remembered with specific mementos (footprints, hand prints, pictures alone and with any surviving/deceased co-multiples, clothes, name band, ultrasound pictures, Certificate of Life)
- to be nurtured (cleaned, wrapped and dressed)
- to be buried/cremated
- to be remembered

Source/Adapted from: Women's College Hospital, *Rights of the infant at the hospital: At the time of death*, Toronto: Women's College Hospital, 1984

Rights of the Bereaved Parents

- to see, to touch, to hold, to nurture their child(ren) with no limitation as to the time or frequency
- to understand, without judgment, that one or both parents may not wish to see their deceased baby(ies)
- to be fully informed about the baby(ies), as to the cause of death if known, and the process of legitimizing the death (i.e. the funeral)
- to have written and verbal information about:
 - choices available for the burial or funeral
 - supports available to family members, including connection with/referral to Multiple Births Canada's Loss Peer Support Network
 - the necessary legal information (e.g. timing of burial, correct birth registration(s), e.g. one of twins, two of triplets, etc.)
- to receive mementos of their baby(ies) (e.g. foot prints, pictures alone and with any surviving/deceased co-multiples, Certificates of Life)
- to acknowledge the life and death of their child(ren) as a person or persons within a family
- to choose any type of burial, cremation or other funeral service
- to be heard and listened to by caring professionals, without judgment or prejudice
- to have staff who are empathetic, caring and sensitive to individual responses, behaviour and choices
- to be treated with respect and dignity

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Loss and Grief: Statement of Rights

- to have family and/or funeral support at any time – if the parents wishes
- to seek religious or cultural support for their choices and to be treated with cultural and religious sensitivity
- to be aware of the grieving process – to be able to grieve openly or quietly and to be informed of, and understand, the feelings and emotions generated by loss
- it being understood that there is not only the loss of a child(ren) but also of a unique parenting experience
- to understand their future options regarding autopsy and genetic counselling
- to receive autopsy results or other medical information in a timely fashion
- to be informed about bereaved multiple-birth parent support groups, e.g. Multiple Births Canada, www.multiplebirthscanada.org and its Loss Peer Support Network and Lynda P. Haddon, www.jumelle.ca
- to receive follow-up supportive care (at the hospital, primary care practitioner's office and/or home) by telephone or by visit
- to have an opportunity to evaluate their hospital and community experience.

Source/Adapted from: Women's College Hospital, *Rights of parents at the hospital: At the time of the baby's death*, Toronto: Women's College Hospital, 1984

Adapted from: Health Canada, *Family-Centred Maternity and Newborn Care: National Guidelines*, Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Ottawa, 2000

Multiple-Birth Loss Resources

Multiple Births Canada's, Peer Loss Support Network

Email: loss@multiplebirthscanada.org

Toll Free in Canada: 1-866-228-8824

Lynda P. Haddon, Multiple Birth Educator, www.jumelle.ca

Centre for Loss in Multiple Birth (CLIMB), Alaska, www.climb-support.org

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