



PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS NETWORK

Care and Support during COVID

Referrals still welcome

WE ARE STILL ACCEPTING REFERRALS AND PROVIDING PEER SUPPORT DURING THIS TIME.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, our Family Support services remain available to people who have experienced the loss of their pregnancy or the death of their baby. We have online support groups, a private Facebook group, and a website with resources for families and professionals.

Available supports

Online Circles of Support groups:

These groups are for anyone who wants to connect online with other families who have experienced a pregnancy or infant loss in a mixed-loss group. This means that families with different types of loss will be together in one group. They are generally offered once a month and details are shared with the family directly once we have received a referral from a professional or the family has requested support themselves.

Online support (specific to type of loss):

These online groups are separated by the type of loss the family has experienced and include groups for first trimester loss, second trimester loss, third trimester loss, infant death, SIDS, and termination of pregnancy. These groups typically meet twice a month and details are shared with the family directly once we have received a referral from a professional or the family has requested support themselves.

REFER A FAMILY HERE

Facebook group:

PAIL Network hosts a private group on Facebook for any family who wishes to connect with others in a moderated environment via social media. **CONNECT**

Resources:

All of PAIL Network's booklets can be found online for families to read on our website, and families are always offered a hard copy of a booklet to be mailed out to them at no cost at the time of their intake. Professionals can order copies of our general brochure and our booklets to have on hand to give families at the time of their loss. Families have told us that receiving booklets from their health care provider has been meaningful as the information included can help them to navigate the coming days and weeks after their loss.



FIND RESOURCES HERE

Your care matters

Core elements of bereavement care can be maintained when a pregnancy ends or a baby dies during the COVID-19 pandemic. PAIL Network recognises that there are many new considerations required when providing bereavement care given the current constraints in Ontario. Your kind, compassionate care can make a difference for families.

Things you may wish to offer families:

- Acknowledgement of their loss and of individual responses to grief and trauma, and in particular, how the restrictions that are in place may further impact their ability to mourn this loss. **FIND SOME EXAMPLES HERE.** You may also wish to say:
 - "I'm sorry we are meeting under these circumstances"
 - "I'm sorry we don't have a private space for you right now"
 - "Is there anyone else you want to call while we talk?"

- “I’m sorry for your loss”
- “Families have told us that the pandemic has made this time even harder for them”
 - “How are you doing today?”
 - “Is there anything I can do right now to help?”
 - “What type of support do you have at home?”
- Identify who, if anyone, is permitted to be present with the person who is carrying the pregnancy. Encourage the family to include other support people by using live videoconferencing (i.e. FaceTime) if they would like.
- Continue to offer the recognition of parenthood and the opportunity to make memories with their baby, including photographs. For more guidance about how to take photos, [click here](#).
- When possible, give families time to make decisions. Reassure families that it is safe to be in the hospital. Many people are afraid of being in the hospital right now and may make quick decisions that they will regret later. It is a gift to the family for you to help to slow things down.
- Provide clear instructions on what to expect next and who to contact if they have questions or concerns. It may also help to remind the family that they can make an appointment for postpartum follow up with their primary care provider or OB provider (and that this may be a virtual appointment).
- Information on lactation after loss. A person may lactate after around 15-16 weeks gestational age. PAIL Network has resources for professionals [here](#). All of our booklets for families also talk about lactation after loss.
- Talk to families about ways to honour their baby. A family may want to have access to their baby’s remains, regardless of gestational age. Many funeral homes will be able to talk through the options for burial/cremation/memorial services, even for babies under 20 weeks. While there may be timelines associated with burial/cremation for babies born over 20 weeks, there is no timeline on having a memorial service or ceremony. A family may want to hold a ceremony later, when physical distancing restrictions are lifted. As a professional, you can help a family by normalizing this.

Referrals to PAIL Network

One of the most important ways you can support families is to ensure they are aware of what will happen next, including follow up appointments and opportunities to receive psychosocial support.

With the family's consent, you can refer a family for peer support on the PAIL Network website here:
<https://pailnetwork.sunnybrook.ca/healthcare-professionals/referral/>

You can make a positive difference with the care you provide. Thank you for all you do to provide compassionate care to families, especially during this time.

Psychological support for staff

Even when we aren't in the midst of a pandemic, caring for families who are experiencing pregnancy and infant loss can take an emotional toll. You may find that your emotions are closer to the surface as a result of the stressful circumstances of COVID-19. Now, more than ever, it is important to take care of yourself and your mental health at work.

FOR MORE IDEAS ON HOW TO DO THIS VISIT:

PAIL NETWORK

TEND ACADEMY

ONTARIO.CA

Under 'Mental health, wellness, and addictions support'.