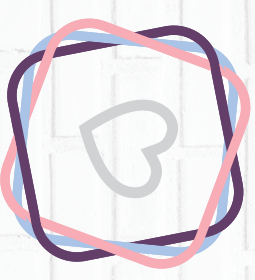


# TellListenConnect

## COMMUNICATION GUIDE FOR CARE PROFESSIONALS



[pailnetwork.ca/TLC](http://pailnetwork.ca/TLC)

## Tell

### the family

#### what to expect:

- What will they see
- What will they feel physically
- What will they hear

Many families have never thought about what would happen if their baby dies, and will be looking to you for guidance. Anticipatory guidance allows families to begin to understand the situation and what decisions may be ahead for them.

It is important to set up the conversation, and leave enough time to allow the family time to absorb the information and for you to assess their level of understanding.

Offer them choices at each stage- you may need to return to the "Tell" stage multiple times during your care interactions.

"I would like to talk with you about what you can expect to happen- I can tell you about what you may feel physically, what you can expect to see, and some of the language you may hear us use when we are talking to each other. Is that okay?"

"There are things we can do to provide you with lasting mementos of your baby. This isn't something we expect you to know already, and I can talk with you about each of the choices."

"If there is anything you want me to repeat, or if you would like something that I haven't mentioned, please ask me."

## Listen

### Listen to the family's words

During your conversations, tune in to how the family is talking about their baby and mirror back to them the same language. If they have given their baby a name, use the baby's name in any future interactions.

Listen for any clues about how the family has understood information provided to them, and offer clarification or additional information as needed.

Try to stay attuned to any subtle questioning about what is "okay" to do or to not do, and be aware of your own feelings and opinions to offer non-judgemental and neutral options for families.

"I'm so sorry you are not going to be able to continue your pregnancy."

"You had so many plans for your baby girl. This is so hard."

"What a beautiful name you have chosen. Do you want to tell me more about how you picked his name?"

"Would it be helpful for me to explain how the medication will work that will bring on contractions? We can talk about how you might want to manage any pain, too."

"Many families will choose to take photos of their baby, and we have ideas we can share with you for different poses or types of photos, if that's something you think you might like to do. I'm sure it's not something you have ever thought about before so it's natural to take some time making these choices."

# Listen

Listen to the family's words

**Families may be looking to you for the words to use; provide language for them to share with you when they are comfortable.**

*"Sometimes we can make a different plan if you have thought about your options and have different goals or worries. We can talk about your fears, hopes, and even things that you think might bring you strength. Is there something that you want to talk more about now?"*

# Connect

Connect the family with support

**Consider having resources ready to go for families when they need them, or when you are making a discharge plan.**

**Be aware of the different options for support in your community and how families can access them.**

**Offer to make a referral on their behalf as a way to demonstrate that this is a loss deserving of support, and that you are able to provide them with options for connection once they are ready.**

*Packaging resources into a bundle, or including resources alongside memorial items for the family to take home will help reduce the burden of trying to prepare new information each time.*

*Learning about the options in your community and being able to describe them to the family may increase the likelihood of connection—you are a trusted provider and your words matter.*

*Offering a referral for support as an "opt out" demonstrates an understanding of the impact that pregnancy and infant loss will have on a family.*

*"As part of the care that we provide for families, we refer families to an organization called Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network- you may hear people refer to this organization as PAIL Network. By sending your contact information and some details to them, they can reach out to you and talk more about what kinds of support and resources they have available and you can decide what might be best for you. There is no time limit, so you don't need to start right away, but with this connection, you will have someone you can call or email if you are ready to receive support. PAIL Network's support is provided at no cost, and it is peer support- that means that you will be able to meet and talk with other people who have had a similar loss experience to yours. Do I have your consent to go ahead with that referral?"*

# Things to Remember



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- Acknowledging and validating the family's experience will go a long way in building a safe relationship where they can explore their options of care and memory making
- Use silence and pauses as times for reflection and understanding- resist the urge to fill the quiet with more information
- Include other team members where appropriate to support other members of the family (eg. Social Work, Child Life, Spiritual Care)
- Consider ways to care for yourself- strong emotions, difficult feelings, and even personal identification with a family's experience can be a heavy weight to carry
- PAIL Network offers navigation for families who may need additional support with next steps (eg. Finding support, completing paperwork, funeral or memorial arrangements)