

The Impact of Death and Loss on Kentucky's Children



**THE KENTUCKY CENTER FOR
GRIEVING CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

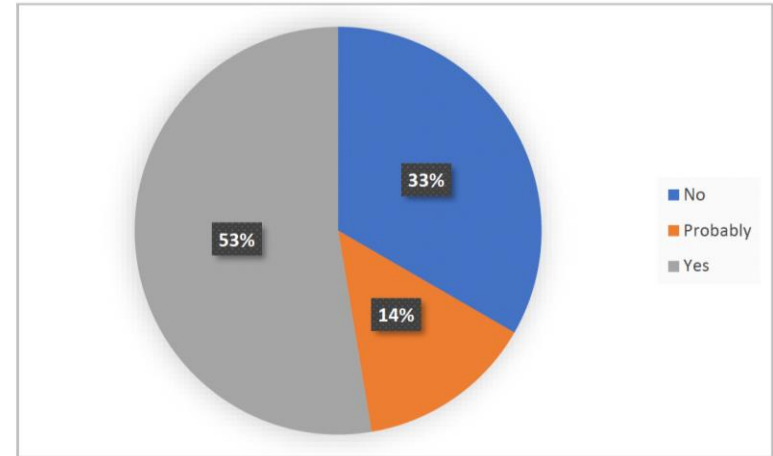
The Issue

- Kentucky ranks #7 in the nation in childhood bereavement.
- 1 in 9 children in the state (11%) will lose a parent or sibling before the age of 18, impacting more than 100,000 children and teens.¹
- These numbers do not include caregiver deaths for the 50,000+ children in kinship care in Kentucky

The Impact of Opioids and Substance-Related Deaths

- 25% of the state's parentally bereaved children have experienced loss from overdose-related deaths (far above the national average of 19%).²
- Female substance-related deaths in Kentucky have increased significantly since 2019.

Substance Use as a Contributing Factor in 2018 Maternal Accidental Deaths



Source: Public Health Maternal Mortality Review, Annual Report 2021 (CHFS)

Long Term Impacts of Early Death Loss

- Recent studies have shown direct connections between childhood bereavement and later SUD.^{3, 4}
- Bereaved youth are more likely to experience subsequent juvenile justice involvement.⁵
- Increases in depression, anxiety, and other mental health concerns for children and teens with death loss; poorer physical health, including early death.⁶

Educational Impacts on Bereaved Children

- Unsupported grief has negative emotional, behavioral, and educational outcomes: **19% of bereaved youth are suspended, expelled, or have to repeat a grade⁷**
- Children who lost a parent had lower grades and an increased risk of “adverse socioeconomic trajectories later in life.”⁸

Solutions: Beginning to Build a Statewide Resource

- The Kentucky Center for Grieving Children and Families (KCGCF), founded in 2020
- Kentucky was one of the last 4 states in the nation to have this type of organization (Ohio and Indiana each have 8+).
- School-based facilitated grief support groups in Fayette, Madison, Scott, Owsley, and Pike; community-based groups in Lexington; statewide online 8-week teen grief support group .
- Recent funding from the KOAAC (\$269,000), the Kentucky Association of Healthcare Plans (\$90,000), the New York Life Foundation (\$100,000), and the Steele-Reese Foundation (\$20,000).

What Can Be Developed

- Comprehensive trainings, toolkits, education, and infrastructure around grief support for children of all ages—for ALL of Kentucky.
- We need your help in forming service partnerships with agencies and community partners (especially for rural communities).

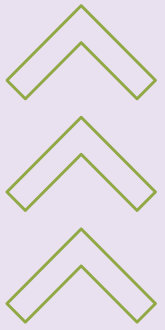
In the Words of Kentucky's Children and Teens: How Has Your Grief Affected You?

- “I wish my family knew that grief is not just when you’re sad but when you are sad and need someone to talk to. And I wish they knew that **you could have grief at any age.**” [Middle school student]
- “My grades started to drop and I was staying up all night in my room by my self.” [Middle school student]
- “I would really get mad a lot and be so sad.” [Middle school student]
- “I have been sad most of the time but I don’t show it.” [Middle school student]
- “Having boyfriends, being mean, doing stuff that I should not be doing.” [Middle school student]

Data
Overview of
FCPS Pilot,
2021-2023



Demographic Info

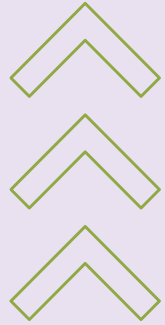


Of participants identified as a person of color.

54%

40%

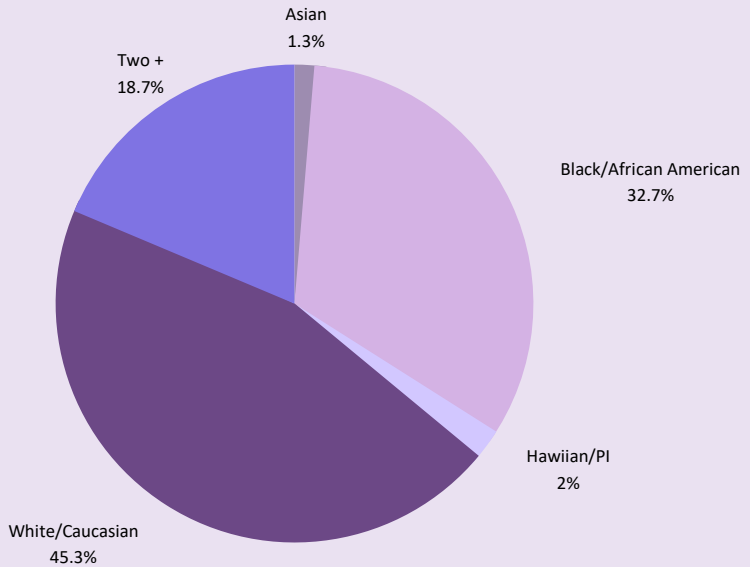
Of participants were considered a low-income household



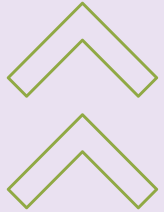
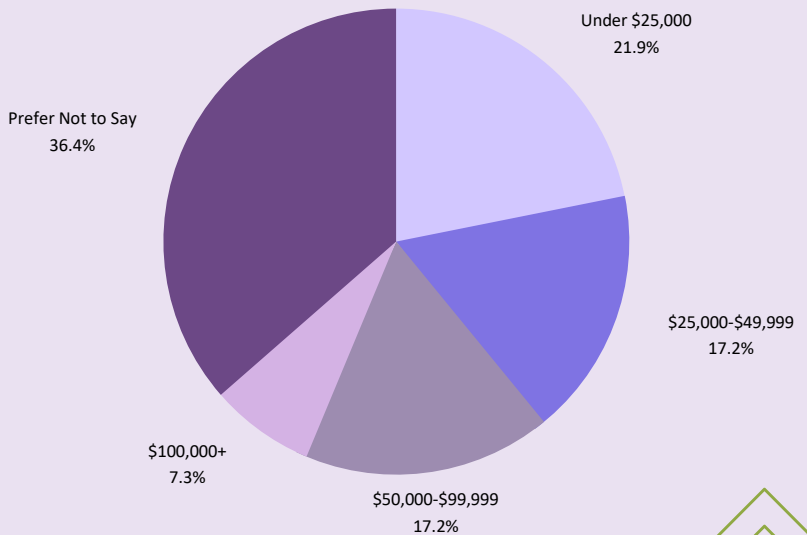


Demographic Info

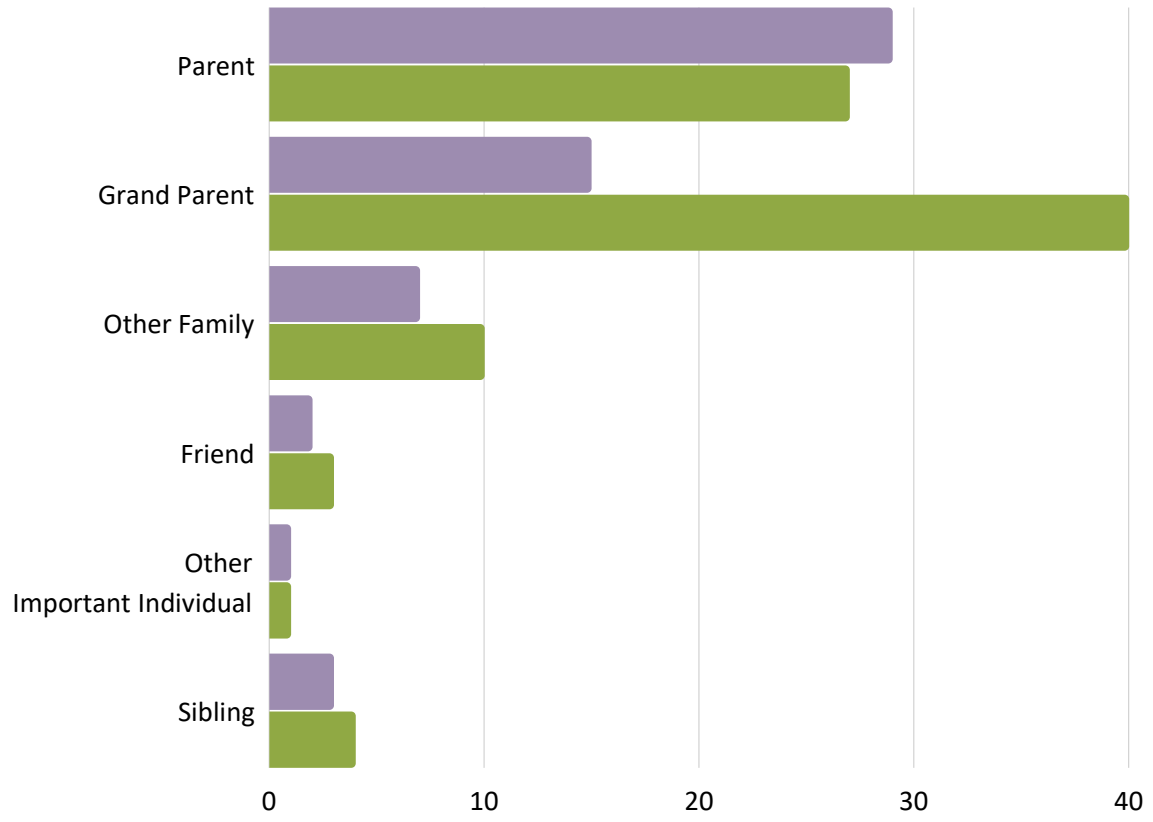
Race/Ethnicity

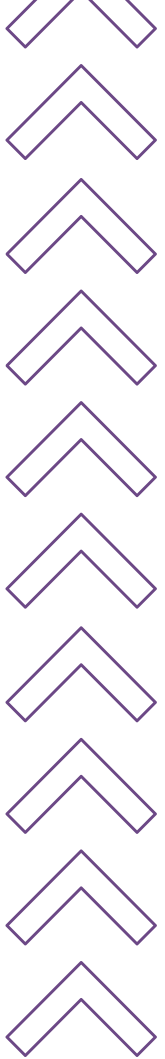


Income

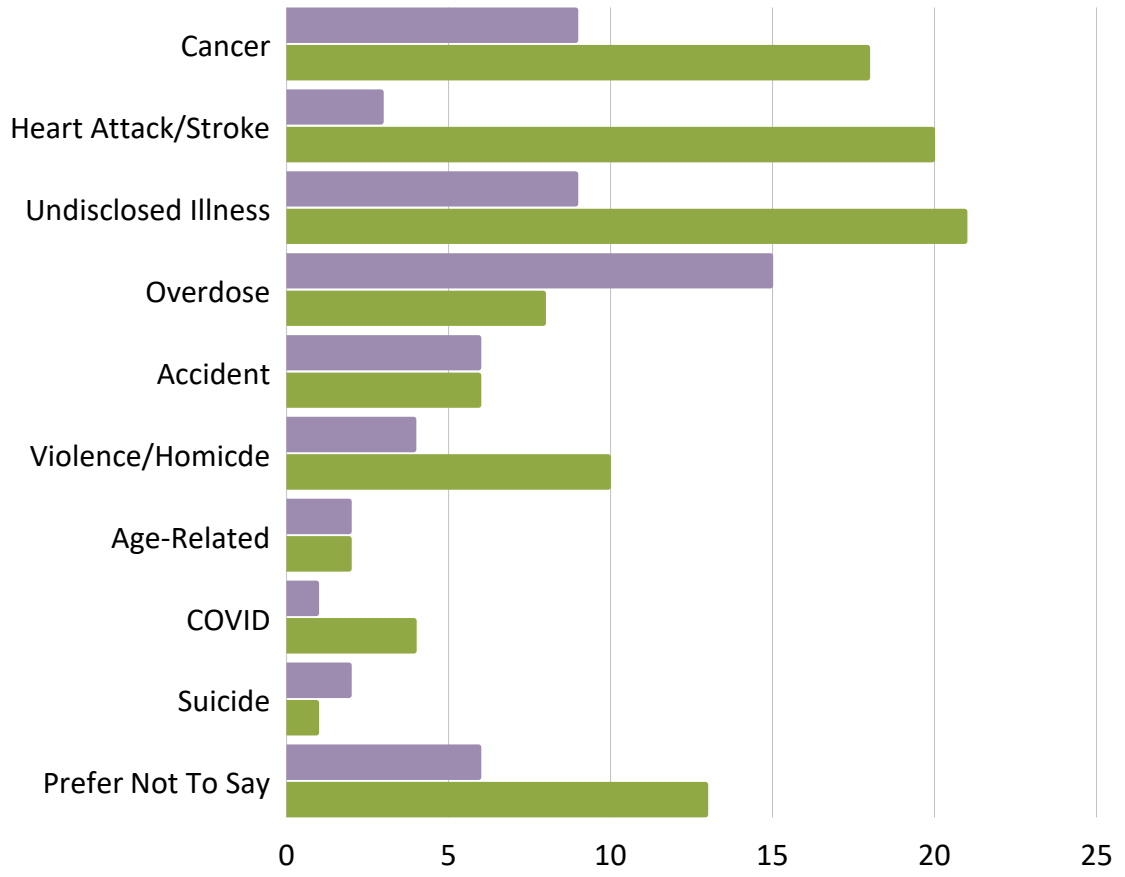


■ Year 1 ■ Year 2



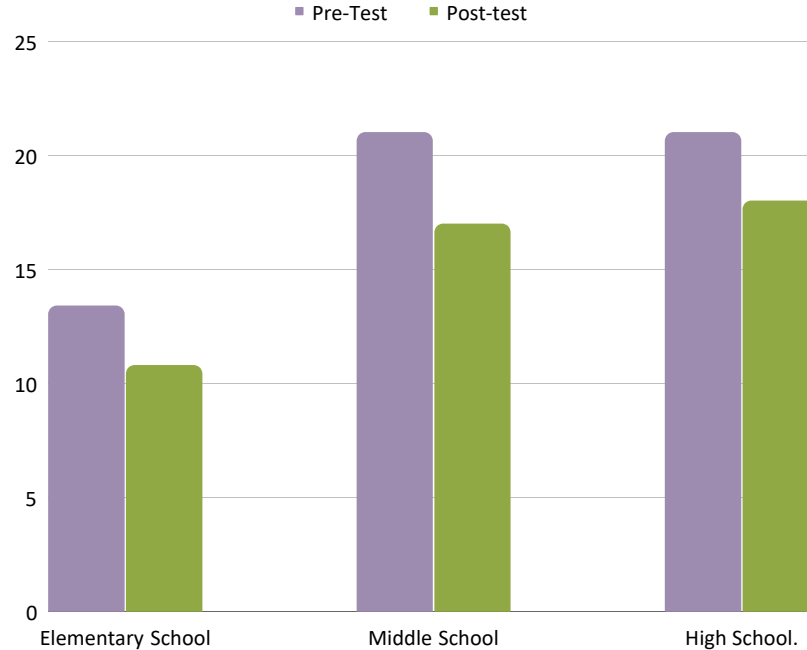


Death Type





Perceived Stress Scale

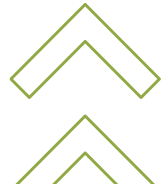


Overall, each student in the program showed lower scores at post-test

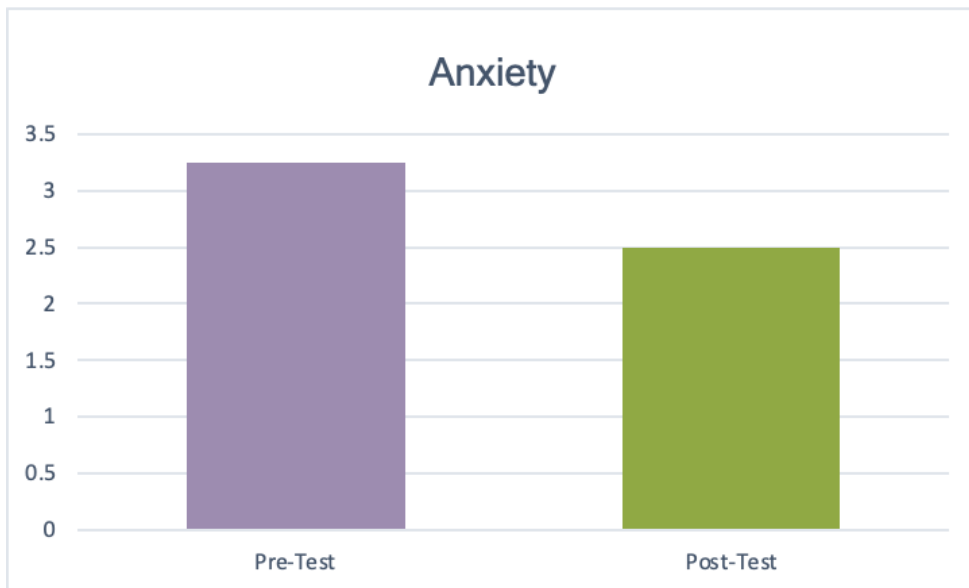
19.4%
Decrease in Elementary Students

19.1%
Decrease in Middle School Students

10%
Decrease in High School Students



SCARED-5 Anxiety Scale (Elementary Age)



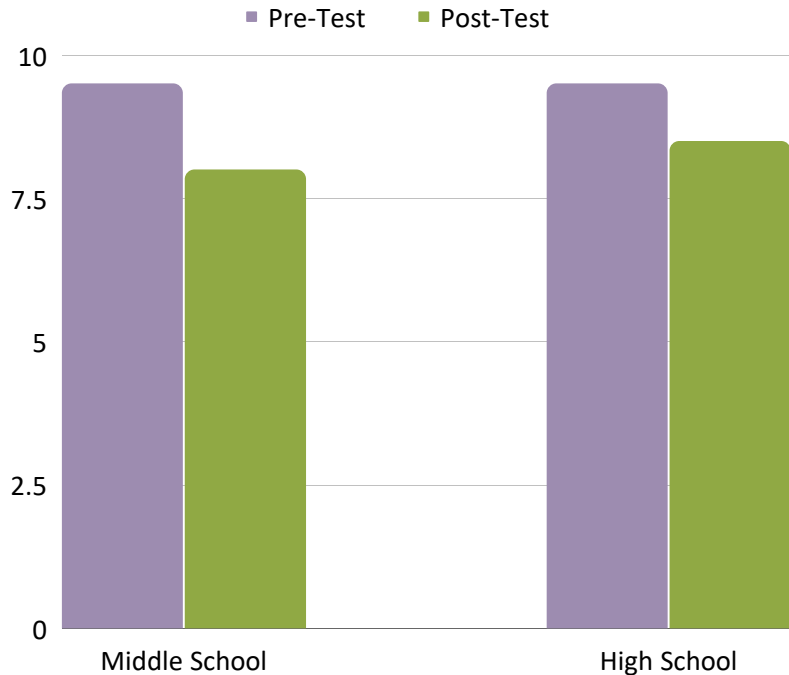
To capture anxiety in an age appropriate manner, we decided to utilize the SCARED-5 anxiety assessment

16.6%
decrease post-test

GAD-7: Anxiety



GAD-7 is scored from a scale of 0 to 14



10.5%
Decrease in High School Students

15.7%
Decrease in Middle School Students



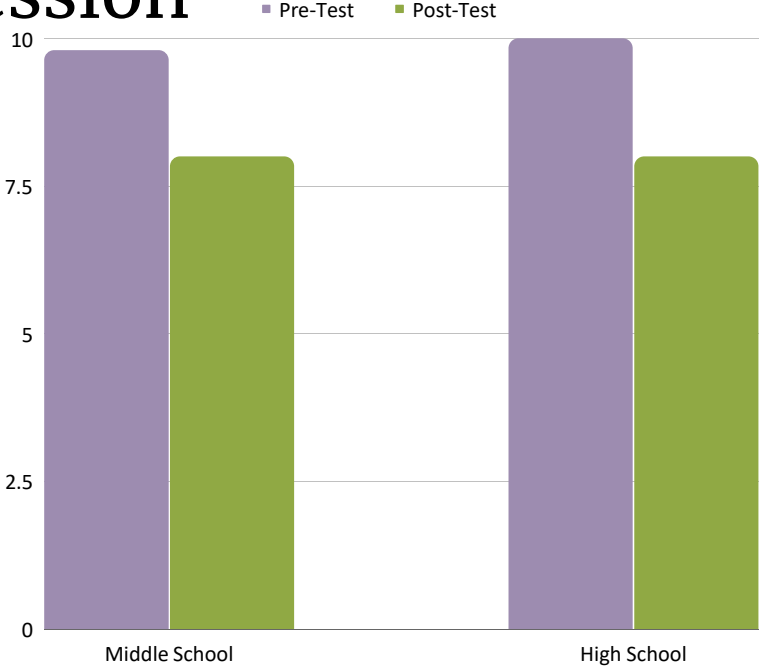
The PHQ-9 is scored on a scale ranging from 0 - 27



18.4%
Decrease in Middle School Students

20%
Decrease in High School Students

PHQ-9: Depression



Sources

- 1. Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model, Kentucky 2023. JAG Institute (<https://judishouse.org/research-tools/cbem/cbem-reports/>)
- 2. Special Report On Parental Overdose-Related Deaths for the State of Kentucky, created November 2022 by the JAG Institute
- 3. Gayman et al., “Time-Clustered Deaths and Substance Use Disorder Among Young Adults,” *Stress Health* 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1002%2Fsmi.2569>
- 4. Butler Center for Research/Hazelden, “Grief and Addiction” 2021, <https://www.hazeldenbettyford.org/research-studies/addiction-research/grief-and-addiction>
- 5. Harnisher et al., *Juv Fam Court J.* 2015 Summer; 66(3): 1–18, (<https://doi.org/10.1111%2Fjfcj.12029>)
- 6. Pham et. al., *Am J Psychiatry*, 2018 175(9):887–896 (<https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2018.17070792>)
- 7. Weaver, David A., *Population Review* 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1353/prv.2019.0006>
- 8. Liu et al., “School Outcomes Among Children Following the Death of a Parent,” *JAMA Netw Open.* 2022;5(4):e223842. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.3842