



NATIONAL GRIEF AWARENESS

Northwest Victim Services
August 2024 Newsletter

MY FATHER'S HOMICIDE LED TO MY GRIEF WHICH LED ME TO HELP OTHERS!



Rachael Reyes-Vazquez, Northwest Victim Services Spanish Speaking Court Advocate, Northwest Victim Services (NVS)





Art has always been a part of my life, even as a child. I was a young artist and stopped during my late teens. When my dad was murdered, I found myself with a lot of grief and insomnia, so I started to use art as therapy to help heal and work through my emotions. I would be up at 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning with no one to call because everyone was asleep. I started to lean on the canvas for grief support. I would seek out opportunities to speak about my artwork in different communities. As a result, community members and co-homicide survivors bonded well together when I would host paint days or workshops that focused on self-expressions which lead to great community conversations. People loved coming together to do something positive and creative with other people who shared similar experiences. I used my network to provide a resource to those affected by crime – so here I stand still helping others heal from their grief and helping myself heal in the process.

Rachael Reyes-Vazquez, Bilingual Court Advocate, Northwest Victim Services (NVS)



Hope for Future Generations

RACHAEL REYES-VAZQUEZ

Inspired by the urgency to foster safer communities, this collaborative mural project embodies a shared commitment to supporting our younger generations.

In the face of pervasive gun violence, many families in Philadelphia are grappling with diminished resources to promote youth engagement and optimism. Recognizing the pivotal role of mentorship in preemptive gun violence prevention, we embrace the task of nurturing healing and hope within our youth. Art stands as a powerful medium to guide our youth towards self-discovery and confidence, and to empower them to become champions of their own destinies.

In partnership with communities of diverse backgrounds, this mural seeks to encapsulate the collective dreams and emotions of young individuals united by a shared hope for a gun-free future. We believe that by investing in our youth's creative potential, we inspire a ripple effect of positivity, with each child becoming an ambassador of progress within their neighborhoods.

Grief

Victims of crime or are “surviving” the loss of someone who was murdered grieves in their own unique way. Everyone is different. There is no right way to get through what you’re going through. Only you know what works for you!

Types of Grief for Victims of a Crime:

Loss of a basic sense of safety; the world no longer feels like a safe place.

Loss of bodily integrity or function.

Loss of income and everything that comes with that.

Loss of a particular future you thought you had.

Loss of identity of not being a victim.

Loss of a loved one; This is the one that is impossible to put into words, especially for Mothers, Fathers, & children who lost a parent to crime.

My advice is not to the mothers, fathers, or children but to those who want to help them. Don’t tell them it will get easier because it usually doesn’t. Choose your words carefully because you may cause more harm than good. Just be there with them and for them in their Impossible Grief Loss of the future without their loved one.

Types of Grief for Co-homicide Survivors:

Loss of the loved one’s future.

Loss of the basic sense of fairness & justice, which includes a basic trust in all good things.

We must do everything we can to support one another in order to heal and to restore well-being to our families, neighbors and communities.

There is so much work to do.

Janet Etzi, PsyD

NVS



Grief can affect large groups of community members. Free resources are available. Mass shootings are taking place throughout Philadelphia, across the commonwealth and around the world. Even if someone is not a direct victim they can also experience grief such as, sadness, guilt, anger, fear and physical pain.

If your community within PA has experienced a crime that has affected multiple individuals the Keystone Crisis Intervention Team (KCIT) offers FREE services.

What to Expect When Requesting a Team?

- CONFIDENTIALITY
- EXPERIENCED EXPERTS IN TRAUMATIC EVENTS
- NON-JUDGEMENTAL SUPPORT
- EDUCATION ON COMMON REACTION AFTER TRAUMA
- VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

KCIT is not first response and does not come to the scene of the crime.

KCIT is not therapy. KCIT is a short term, secondary response that can connect participants to long term local support as needed.

There is no fee for KCIT services to the community



THE KEYSTONE CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM

1-855-SOS-KCIT

Supporting Pennsylvania Crime Victims and Their Communities



www.kcitpa.org

Email: info@kcitpa.org

What Does KCIT Provide?

KCIT provides trained volunteers to help in times of community crisis by offering group interventions to those impacted by criminal activity or incidents that are under investigation.

This can include victims, witnesses, the community impacted, and professionals helping those affected.

Interventions can be held in person or virtually.



How To Get Help

- 1** Call: 1-855-SOS-KCIT
Email: info@kcitpa.org
- 2** A member of the impacted community will assume the role of host, which will be KCIT's point person in the planning process. This person should have access to the community and its resources.

The host will provide information about the impact of the crime in the community, recruit interested community members, and identify an appropriate space to hold the intervention.
- 3** KCIT and the host will work together to schedule a time for the intervention, which must be at least 72 hours after the crime has occurred or the community has been notified.

What is a Group Crisis Intervention?

KCIT's *Group Crisis Intervention* is a secondary response to a crisis and addresses the gap that exists in-between traditional trauma services offered.

GCI assists individuals in beginning to process the disorganization and overwhelm that is created after experiencing a traumatic event.

- 1 Physical Rescue
- 2 **KCIT GCI**
- 3 Counseling



During a GCI a group is led by a facilitator through a series of questions which aim to help participants sort through their experience of the event, their reactions, and what they continue to hold as a result of the trauma. It is important to understand that a GCI is not therapy and is a one-time intervention.

Normalization and validation of reactions to the event are given along with education about why and how their body was using a natural response to ensure protection against a perceived threat. The group process assists in restoring connection and the feeling that "I am not alone" in my suffering.

**Northwest Victim Services (NVS) offers
counseling and grief support by licensed therapists**

**If you were a victim of crime in the Northwest
Section of Philadelphia Please contact our office
for more information or to be connected to services call our office at
215-438-4410 Ext. 101 or email mpn@northwestvictimservices.org**

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