



GRANT PROPOSAL

THE LEARNING BY GIVING FOUNDATION & FRAMINGHAM STATE UNIVERSITY

Jeff's Place is a nationally known independent non-profit that offers comprehensive support for grieving children and families. Our vision is that no child grieves alone. Our mission is to facilitate the healthy integration of loss for children, teens, and their families by helping them feel connected with each other and less alone in their grief journey. We are a nondenominational, community-based, family-focused organization that provides free grief support groups to children, teens and caregivers in MetroWest Boston, facilitated by licensed clinicians and professionally-trained volunteers. Our licensed, expressive arts therapist-led model is unique as volunteers facilitate most grief support groups. Jeff's Place also offers individual and family therapy on a sliding scale as well as crisis intervention and educational trainings on childhood bereavement for local schools and organizations. In addition to our support services, Jeff's Place is a pioneer in evidenced-based research. We are the lead organization for a national research study to identify the best ways to support grieving children and teens. Jeff's Place provides a safe and supportive place for members of the community to heal and integrate their loss in a healthy and meaningful way.

We recently completed our 5-year strategic plan. In the plan, we committed to four strategic goals; branding; program; research and sustainability. In summary, the goals in each focus area are as follows:

Branding

Community leaders know Jeff's Place, understand its value, and routinely refer people, inquiries and resources to Jeff's Place

Program

Happy, supported families whose needs are being met; who have greater capacity for healing; whose load is lightened; who feel empowered

Research

Research, funding, and practitioner community know about survey tool, and recognize its validity, value, and appropriateness as a standard

Sustainability

Community members can count on the presence of Jeff's Place in their communities for years to come



Over the next 5 years, we would like to increase our visibility in the community, serve more children and families, expand our services to become a full-service grief center, use our evaluation tool to create best-practices for supporting children and remain financially stable and viable.

We are funded by a combination of individual donations (40%), grants (30%) and our spring fundraiser (30%).

Jeff's Place employs three staff members; an Executive Director, a Program Director and an Associate Program Director. We also have a RISE fellow through Americorps, a clinical intern and seven contract clinicians. Staff members and contract clinicians have Masters level degrees. All staff are Caucasian. Our participants come from varying races, ethnicities, socioeconomic strata and family compositions, as grief does not discriminate. As an organization, Jeff's Place does not discriminate based on race, age, religion, ability, marital status, sexual orientation, sex or gender identity.

Jeff's Place respectfully requests \$10,000 to be used to expand our program offerings to include a grief support group for children who are grieving the loss of a parent due to incarceration. One of our long-term organization goals is to meet the needs of all grieving families who are experiencing a loss. Currently, we serve only those who have suffered a death loss but we know that there are other children grieving the loss of a parent due to incarceration or absenteeism. We have gotten calls inquiring about groups for children of incarcerated parents but have not had the capacity to offer that group as of yet. A grant from the Learning By Giving Foundation via Framingham State University would allow us to hire a part-time clinician to provide this programming in our office or at another community organization such as the Y or The Boys and Girls Club. Currently, 2.7 million children in the United States have an incarcerated parent and 10 million children will have an incarcerated parent at some point. Parental incarceration has been shown to have an impact on the child's mental health, social behavior and educational prospects. There is also a social stigma that accompanies incarceration and many children experience trauma related to the arrest or preceding the arrest. The goal of our support groups is to increase peer and family connections, build self-esteem, increase resilience and help to create a new normal.

Grief is a normal reaction to loss but can overwhelm a person's coping abilities, especially a child's. Grief is not a simple process. Complex emotions such as sadness, anxiety, anger, loneliness, guilt, relief, isolation and confusion accompany grief. Children and their families need support, guidance and tools to navigate their grief journey. Our support groups provide consistent support, reassurance and resources, which are crucial. Children need to feel like they are not alone.



We use evaluations and surveys to measure program success. Program participants complete evaluations at the end of the program year. Clinicians and volunteer facilitators complete evaluations after every support group to assess what worked well and what didn't.

Our philosophy is:

- We believe that the expert on grief is the one who is grieving
- We reassure that there is no right or wrong way to grieve
- We promote peer-to-peer connections to decrease feelings of isolation
- We build confidence and self-esteem through trusting and empathic bonds
- We encourage kids to explore their grief through play
- We help integrate memories into a new life story
- We provide hope, healing, and meaningful growth for all whose lives we touch

Our participants enjoy coming to group. Rituals are very important in the grief process and many of our families revolve their schedules and activities around our support groups. Children look forward to group nights and make lifelong friends. They all echo the sentiment that everyone "gets it". We want to create an environment where children with incarcerated parents can be with other children who "get it" so that they do not have to grieve alone.