



Media Kit


Childhood carries on.™





Who We Are



Mission

We give grieving children experiences that change their lives forever.



Vision

Every grieving child deserves to live a life rich with possibility.

Experience Camps is a non-profit that transforms the lives of grieving children through summer camp programs and innovative, year-round initiatives. Through compassion, connection, and play, we allow grieving children to embody a life full of hope and possibility. By amplifying their voices, we are creating a more grief-sensitive culture.



Background

Experience Camps began in 2009, as one camp serving 27 boys in Maine. Over the last 13 years, we have grown to serve nearly 1000 kids and teens at 10 camps in 5 locations around the country.

Camp provides an opportunity for children to be surrounded by peers who “get it” and allows them to focus on the joys of childhood instead of the grief that can wear them down. At camp, grief activities are supervised by grief specialists who facilitate peer-support opportunities and coping techniques for the campers.

With all our gained knowledge from camp, we then applied our hundreds of thousands of hours with grieving kids to create other year-round programs and expert-driven digital content that supports millions of grieving children while building a grief-sensitive culture. This includes our content on [TikTok](#), [Minecraft](#) and other platforms.



What Makes Us Unique

We transform the lives of grieving children through three pillars:

1. Camp

We provide young people with a week-long, no-cost overnight camp that is clinically informed. Our camps provide a space where children can experience the joy of childhood while learning to navigate their feelings with others who have experienced grief firsthand.

2. Community

We meet children where they are — in their schools and communities, and on YouTube, TikTok, Minecraft, and other platforms — to offer innovative content and experiences that normalize their grief and builds new pathways to grief support.

3. Culture

Every one of us will experience grief. We're helping to build a more grief-sensitive society by amplifying the voices and insights of the young people we serve.

Why Our Work Matters

More than five million children in the U.S. will experience the death of a parent, sibling, or primary caregiver by the time they turn 18. Grieving young people are more likely to endure mental health challenges, poor academic performance, and negative long-term physical and financial outcomes than their non-grieving peers. Left unaddressed, childhood grief can undermine a child's future. But with the proper interventions and an ecosystem of support around them, it can lead to remarkable resilience.

Rates of childhood grief



5.6 million

U.S. children will have experienced the death of a parent or sibling by age 18.

Over 250,000

children are dealing with the death of a primary caregiver due to COVID-19.

The racial grief gap



By age 10,

Black and Brown children are 2X more likely to have dealt with the death of their father and 3X more likely to have dealt with the death of their mother.

Black children

make up 14% of U.S. children, and compose 20% of those experiencing the death of a parent to COVID.

65% of all children

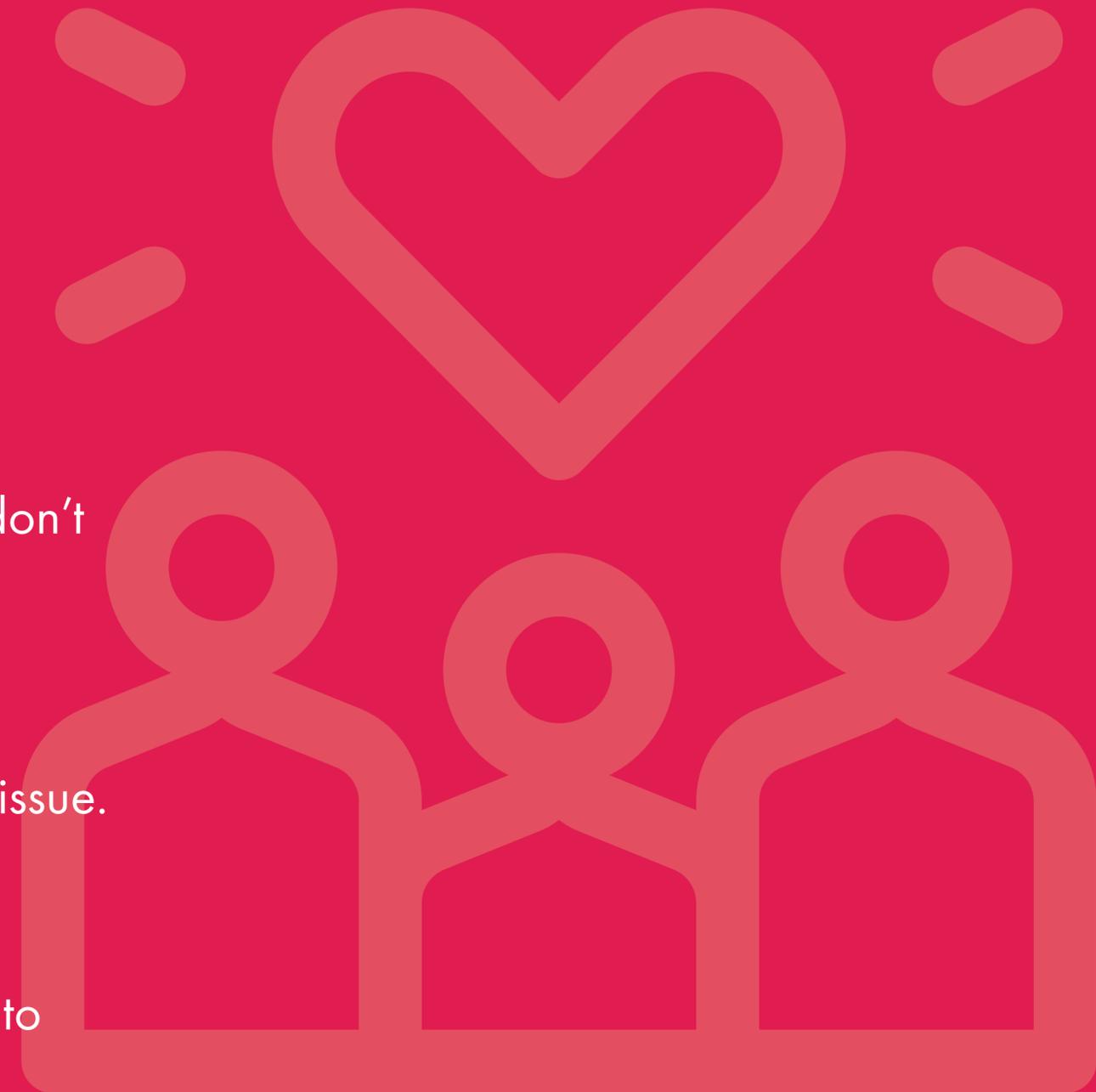
experiencing COVID-associated orphanhood or the death of their primary caregiver are of a racial or ethnic minority.

Potential impacts of childhood bereavement

- Childhood grief is associated with: **developmental disruptions**, including relationship, academic, and career functioning; **substance abuse**; **mental health challenges**, including **depression** and **suicide**; and **poverty**.
- Deaths of relatives who represent key sources of social support can **fundamentally alter youths' economic security** and, in turn, the success and timing of their transition to adulthood.
- Children who experience a parent's death are 50% more likely to **die by early adulthood**.
- Death has an intergenerational impact. Among adults who **lost a parent when they were growing up**, 79% said that when they became a parent, they missed the guidance of the parent who died. 80% said the experience was the hardest thing they ever had to face.

The need for grief support

- **89% of Americans** think that everyone should learn to talk about grief, but 70% don't know what to say or do when someone is grieving.
- **86% of Americans** say that grief should be addressed as an important mental health issue.
- **63% of children** participating in Experience Camps reported using their "grief skills" to help others cope with the pandemic.



Facts and Figures

MISSION	FOUNDED	LOCATIONS	AGES SERVED
<p>We give grieving children experiences that will change their lives forever.</p>	<p>2009</p>	<p>We offer twelve week-long, overnight summer camp programs in California, Georgia, Maine, Michigan, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, serving grieving children from 42 states and 7 countries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages 8 - 18 directly served. • Educational and awareness campaigns reach people of all ages.

Facts and Figures

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Children who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling, or primary caregiver.
- 65% of participating children come from families below the national median household income.
- 36% of participating children are BIPOC.

COST

No cost for children and families.

PROGRAM HOURS

Over 520,000 total program hours with grieving kids over a 14-year span of program operations.

GROWTH RATE

23% increase in applications in 2020 (rolled over for 2021). 500% increase in the waiting list over the past five years.

Facts and Figures

CAMPERs	VOLUNTEERs	IMPACT
<p>900 enrolled in 2022; 1200 projected for 2023.</p>	<p>Approx 500/year; 1000 since 2009.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of participants report higher self-esteem and less loneliness. • 85% of participants return to Experience Camps each year. • 83% of Experience Camps parents/caregivers say their child has used “grief skills” to deal with the pandemic.



Spokespersons for Experience Camps

The following four Experience Camps staff members are available for interviews:



Sara Deren

Founder Chief Executive Officer

Under Sara's leadership, Experience Camps has conducted original research on the state of grief and launched a network of 10 camp programs from coast to coast. She received her MBA from Columbia and blends her background in business and technology with her passion for the mission. In 2020, she received an award for Best Entrepreneurial, Scaling, from Connecticut Entrepreneur Awards and was named a Patriots Difference Maker by The Kraft Family and Patriots Foundation. Sara was named by Causeartist one of 32 non-profit leaders who will impact the world in 2022.

Topics can speak to:

- How and why she founded Experience Camps
- How the model for this grief camp was built on joy
- How her business and finance background helped her scale our non-profit
- What we've learned from thousands of grieving children



Brie Overton

FT, LPC, NCC, Chief Clinical Officer

Brie is a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri – St. Louis in the Department of Counseling and Family Therapy, where she educates and supervises masters and doctoral level students on grief-specific issues in counseling. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor and specializes in anticipatory loss, grief and bereavement, life transitions, and working with underserved populations. At Experience Camps, she oversees the clinical model and application of grief theory and peer support across programs. She is a member of the Association for Death Education and Counseling and has worked in clinical roles at Experience Camps since 2016.

Topics can speak to:

- How to help young people navigate grief
- How stigmatized grief (overdose, homicide, suicide, etc.) is different
- Debunking the myth of the 5 Stages of Grief and why they still linger
- How to help kids feel less alone/weird in their grief



Michelle Cove

Director of Communications

Michelle draws on her 25+ years as a professional media maker to create content that educates the public on childhood grief and brings awareness to our work. She is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, journalist, and national bestselling author whose projects have been featured on numerous national platforms including *The Today Show*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*. From 2014 to 2020, Michelle was the founder and Executive Director of MEDIAGIRLS, a nonprofit that empowers young women to harness the power of media to uplift one another.

Topics can speak to:

- The gifts she gained from experiencing the death of both parents
- How our culture can do better at showing up for those who are grieving
- Why “I’m sorry for your loss” isn’t cutting it – as shared by our campers
- 5 things you can do to support someone who is grieving



Jesse Moss

Senior Manager of Marketing & Creative Services

Jesse’s own grief experience has informed her path and purpose in her roles at Experience Camps. She is adept at connecting people to our mission, helps build external partnerships and creates media assets that give voice to the experiences of grieving children. Before joining Experience Camps, she worked as a social-media marketer for Warner Bros. Television, an Associate Producer for E! Network, and Digital Communications Strategies for the National Endowment for the Humanities. She received her BA from the University of Florida and ran the NYC Marathon in 2021 on our behalf.

Topics can speak to:

- How being queer impacted the way she experienced grief
- How being the child and a sibling of addicts impacted the way she experienced grief
- How she healed by working with grieving kids at Experience Camps
- Sibling grief and parental grief in her twenties and thirties

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EducationWeek®

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