

To: Mental Health Professionals and Agencies
Re: Referral Guidelines for Kara's Grief Counseling Programs

Kara now offers two kinds of grief counseling services for bereaved individuals: peer counseling and psychotherapy.

Peer Support

Kara's peer support program is for those who are experiencing "normal" grief without complications. Peer support is available as individual counseling and in support groups. In the peer support program, services are provided by trained volunteers who have personal experience with grief and loss. These volunteers participate in an initial 25-hour training program that teaches them how to support bereaved individuals. After this formal training, the volunteer counselors and group facilitators receive on-going supervision, consultation and training from staff, clinical advisors, and experts in end-of-life care and bereavement.

Grief-Related Psychotherapy

While Kara's peer support model is appropriate for many people, some clients have circumstances that complicate their grief work (see list below). When peer support is not sufficient to address a client's needs, Kara offers referrals to psychotherapy, either through Kara's internal psychotherapy program or through external resources. Kara's internal psychotherapy services are provided by therapist interns who have excellent clinical training as well as a depth of knowledge and experience in helping clients deal with complex issues of grief and loss.

To ensure that clients receive the level of support that is appropriate for their needs, Kara does an initial assessment interview with each potential client. Factors that would indicate therapy as the appropriate support rather than peer counseling include:

- Complicated personal or family issues
- Severe depression or anxiety
- Stress reactions due to traumatic circumstances, such as witnessing the death
- Inability to function at work, home, or school for a prolonged period after a death
- Desire for family or couples counseling rather than individual support
- Thought disorder illness, for example, schizophrenia
- Active substance abuse, including those currently in rehabilitation programs
- Active suicidal threat or self-harming behavior
- Need for individual support for a child or teen
- Pre-existing issues of clinical focus that re-emerge or require further support

Clients who receive peer support at Kara may also be in therapy, either within Kara or with an outside therapist. When appropriate, Kara's counseling staff will work collaboratively in a support role with the primary therapist or physician.

Kara does not charge a fee for its peer support services. We encourage those clients who are in a financial position to do so to make donations to help offset the administrative cost of Kara's services; however, services are not based on a client's ability to donate.

Kara does charge a fee for its psychotherapy services. Sliding scale fees may be available based on demonstrated need.

The clinical team includes:

- **Sue Linville Shaffer, Ed.D., MFT, Kara Director of Clinical Services, Clinical Supervisor**
- **Nancy Braga Andersen, M.A., MFT Intern**
- **Shelly Gillan, M.A. MFT Intern; Kara Client Services Director**
- **Reed Letsinger, M.A., MFT Intern**
- **Julie Norton, M.A., MFT Intern**
- **Liz Powell, M.A., MFT Intern; Director of Kara Youth and Family Services**

We hope this information will assist you when you recommend our services to your clients. If you have any questions, please contact us at (650) 321-5272.