Loss and Grief: Statement of Rights and Needs of Deceased Multiple-Birth Infant(s) and Their Grieving Parents

Bereaved parents, their deceased infant(s), as well as any co-multiple survivor(s), have certain rights and dignities to which each is entitled not only at the time of death but also in the days, weeks and months following loss. The following encapsulates those rights and needs.

Rights of the Deceased Infant(s)
- to be acknowledged by name and sex
- to be acknowledged as part of or as twins, triplets, quadruplets or more
- to be treated with respect and dignity
- to be with the grieving family whenever possible
- to be recognized as a person(s) who has lived and who has died
- to be remembered with specific mementos (footprints, hand prints, pictures alone and with any surviving/deceased co-multiples, clothes, name band, ultrasound pictures)
- to be nurtured (wrapped, dressed, cleaned)
- to be buried/cremated
- to be remembered

Source/Adapted from: Women’s College Hospital, Rights of the infant at the hospital: At the time of death, Toronto: Women’s College Hospital, 1984

Rights of the Bereaved Parent
- to see, to touch, to hold, to nurture their child(ren) with no limitation as to the time or frequency
- to understand without judgment that one or both parents may not wish to see their baby(ies)
- to be fully informed about the baby(ies), the cause of death, and the process of legitimizing the death (i.e. the funeral)
- to have written and verbal information about:
  - the choices available for the burial or funeral
  - the supports available to family members, and
- the necessary legal information (e.g. timing of burial, correct birth registration[s], eg. one of twins, two of triplets, etc.)
- to receive mementos of their baby(ies) (eg. foot prints, pictures alone and with any surviving/deceased co-multiples, certificates of life)
- to acknowledge the life and death of their child(ren) – a person or persons within a family
- to choose any type of burial, cremation, or other funeral service
- to be heard and listened to by caring professionals, without judgment or prejudice
- to have staff who are empathetic, caring and sensitive to individual responses, behaviour and choices
- to be treated with respect and dignity
- to have family and/or funeral support at any time – if the parents wishes
- to seek religious or cultural support for their choices and to be treated with cultural and religious sensitivity
- to be aware of the grieving process – to be able to grieve openly or quietly and to be informed of, and understand, the feelings and emotions generated by loss
- to understand their future options regarding autopsy and genetic counselling
- to receive autopsy results or other medical information in a timely fashion
- to be informed about parent support groups, eg. Multiple Births Canada, www.multiplebirhscanada.org and Lynda P. Haddon, www.multiplebirthsfamilies.com
- to receive follow-up supportive care (at the hospital, primary care practitioner’s office and/or home) by telephone or by visit
- to have an opportunity to evaluate their hospital and community experience.

Source/Adapted from: Women’s College Hospital, Rights of parents at the hospital: At the time of the baby’s death, Toronto: Women’s College Hospital, 1984

Adapted from: Health Canada, Family-Centred Maternity and Newborn Care: National Guidelines, Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Ottawa, 2000
Multiple-Birth Loss Resources

Multiple Births Canada’s, Loss Support Network
Email: loss@multiplebirthscanada.org
Toll Free in Canada: 1-866-228-8824

Multiple Births Canada’s, Loss Support Kit—a compendium of multiple-birth loss literature, www.multiplebirthscanada.org

Lynda P. Haddon, Multiple Birth Educator, www.multiplebirthsfamilies.com

Centre for Loss in Multiple Birth (CLIMB), Alaska, www.climb-support.org

Dr. Elizabeth Pector (United States) www.geocities.com/synspectrum/multicity.html

TAMBA Bereavement Support Group (England) www.surreyweb.org.uk/tamba

Twin Loss (New Zealand) www.twinloss.org.nz

OzMOST (Australia) www.ozmost.com.au

Adapted by Lynda P. Haddon, Multiple Birth Educator, 2009

Multiple Births Canada’s Loss Literature

Loss Booklets
- Loss of a Multiple: Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infancy, Multiple Births Canada
- Loss of a Multiple: Childhood, Teens, Multiple births Canada
- Loss of a Multiple: The Role of a Parent of Multiples Club, Multiple Births Canada

Loss Fact Sheets
- Loss of One, More or All Babies
- Grief: How Can I Help?
- Holidays & Grief
- How Can I Help Myself?: Dealing with Grief
- Talking with Your Children About Death
- Pregnancy After Loss, written by Ann Douglas and Lynda P. Haddon
- Grieving Grandparents
- Suggestions for Widows/Widowers
- When a Multiple Birth Parent Dies, written by Lynda P. Haddon and Arthur S. Leonoff, Psychologist/Psychoanalyst
- Multifetal Pregnancy Reduction
- Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome
- Vanishing Twin Syndrome
- Loss Support Organizations
- Loss Reading List

Also Available: Multiple Births Canada Loss Support Kit, comprising all of the above Multiple Births Canada literature and more.

Written and Developed by Lynda P. Haddon, Multiple Birth Educator, July 2009

Questions?
Call: (705) 429-0901 or (866)228-8824 (toll free)
To order copies, call or write:
Multiple Births Canada
Box 432 Wasaga Beach, Ontario, Canada L9Z 1A4
office@multiplebirthscanada.org

All material provided by Multiple Births Canada is for information only and does not constitute medical advice.

© Copyright Multiple Births Canada 2009
The contents of this publication may not be reproduced or reused in any form, without permission in writing from Multiple Births Canada.