What will happen on a typical evening?
Twice each month, parents or guardians will bring the family to BRIDGES. The evening begins with a potluck dinner. After dinner, children and adults divide into groups appropriate for their ages. These groups are led by trained facilitators. Sharing time in groups emphasizes discussion and peer interaction, and is a time when freedom to recount memories or express feelings and concerns is important.

Other activities may include working with clay, drama, music, games, memory projects, puppets and recreation.

Is someone available to visit with our group to tell us more about BRIDGES? A member of our staff will be happy to visit with your group. Call our office, 253.272.8266, to speak with a staff member and schedule an appointment.

Talking about all those mixed-up feelings is part of the healing that happens at BRIDGES.

BRIDGES: A Center for Grieving Children
310 North K Street
Tacoma, WA 98403

253.272.8266

BRIDGES is non-profit, tax exempt and non-sectarian. Our programs are funded by the City of Tacoma, donations, grants, parent pledges based on a sliding fee scale, and the Mary Bridge Foundation.

MultiCare Health System
MultiCare Allenmore Hospital
MultiCare Auburn Medical Center
MultiCare Good Samaritan Hospital
MultiCare Mary Bridge Children's Hospital
MultiCare Tacoma General Hospital
MultiCare Clinics

MultiCare
BetterConnected

(Rev. 7/14)

MultiCare
Mary Bridge Children's Hospital
& Health Center
PO Box 5299
Tacoma WA 98415-0299

SO THAT NO CHILD GRIEVES ALONE.

Children and Grief

How the BRIDGES program can help

MultiCare
Mary Bridge Children's Hospital
& Health Center

www.multicare.org/bridges

BRIDGES is a safe place. . .

Children in grief need a place they can go where it's okay to be themselves. At BRIDGES they can laugh or cry, play or vent anger—without feeling pressure to "get over it" or to "straighten up."

with safe people.

Trained, caring volunteer group facilitators serve as companions to kids working through grief. The staff of BRIDGES is there to guide and nurture—not to teach, direct, or "fix" people.

You aren't the only one.

One of the benefits of a grief center for children is the regular association with other children who have also experienced a loss. Children helping children is a key element at BRIDGES.

There is time to "be a kid". .

Grieving adults aren't always easy for children to be around. Children can't handle sadness and pain for long periods of time. BRIDGES gives them opportunities to play—to be kids again and to heal.

to express feelings and experiences . . .

It's easy for people to feel like they are "going crazy" as they wade through their grief. The support groups at BRIDGES allow experiences and feelings to be expressed and validated in a setting that is non-threatening, and that offers acceptance.

and opportunities to remember together.

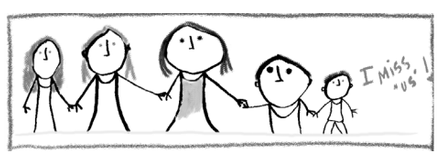
No one wants to forget a loved one. Activities and times of sharing at BRIDGES allow children to share their memories and create tangible items that will help them remember.

There are listening ears that promote healing. . .

Genuine listening is therapeutic: it helps us heal. Children don't care how much we know—they want to know how much we care. Listening ears are always available at BRIDGES.

. . . and lots of caring.

Grieving children often feel that the people in their world are pulling away from them. They need the reassurance that they are still loved. At BRIDGES, the hugs are plentiful and free!



What Is BRIDGES? BRIDGES is a family-based grief support program where families with children, ages 4-18 who have experienced the death of someone close to them, or who know someone with a serious illness, come together to heal. We offer support groups for children as well as concurrent groups for adults.

Who can attend BRIDGES? The BRIDGES grief support center is available to everyone—regardless of race, religion, or economic status. BRIDGES' services are designed to serve families with children who have experienced the death of a parent or sibling or who are living with someone with a serious diagnosis. Parents and caregivers attend a group meeting at the same time their children meet with their peer group.

Are services limited to people within a certain geographic area? People are welcome to attend BRIDGES from anywhere. Most families come from Pierce, King, Thurston and Kitsap counties. If you live closer to Puyallup, please talk with us about options in that area.

How do children and families get into a group? Families who are interested in BRIDGES can arrange for an intake interview by calling the BRIDGES office. A "Parent Pledge" is requested, based on a sliding fee scale.

Are visitors or prospective families allowed to sit in on groups to observe the process? To respect the privacy of the children and adults in our program, visitors cannot attend support group meetings. Prospective families will have an opportunity to learn about BRIDGES' services through literature, meetings with the staff, and a tour of the facility.

What are the qualifications of those in charge? Our staff are professional people, trained to help those in grief. Many of our volunteer facilitators work in one of the helping professions. We seek to provide safe groups led by caring volunteers who have been trained to lead peer support groups. When support groups meet at BRIDGES, there is a trained staff person present to oversee services.

What kind of training do the group facilitators have? Some of our facilitators are professionals from the human services field. Others are concerned members of our community who want to help grieving children and their parents. All complete a 32 hour training session which includes:

- information about children and grief
- recognizing developmental needs of children
- therapeutic activities for children
- group dynamics
- listening skills
- self-awareness skills in the areas of death and grief

On-going training includes reading materials, videos and participation in quarterly inservice.