

Holiday HUGS Program

Pumpkin spice lattes. Steaming hot cocoa. Storefronts dressed in holiday style. 'Tis the holiday season, a season filled with gaiety and Hallmark moments—unless you're missing someone you love.

Many grieverers say there is no harder time than the holidays, leaving funeral professionals with a prime opportunity for community outreach through HUGS—Holiday Understanding Grief Support.

WHAT IS HUGS?

HUGS was created over 10 years ago by aftercare specialist Linda Findlay in response to organizations who wanted to do something for grieving families but didn't have the staff or tools. Today, HUGS has partnered with hundreds of organizations to provide a private label program that's helped thousands of families during a difficult time of year.

A successful interactive program that provides comfort and support to your families during one of the hardest times of the year, HUGS is a workshop, sharing circle, and candlelight ceremony all rolled into one special event.

Program includes:

- Workshop to help cope with the holidays
- Sharing circle
- Candlelighting ceremony including candles and music

Organization benefits:

- A positive community impression
- Builds relationships
- Creates referrals
- Your organization receives the recognition while families get the support they need

Use the following instructions and corresponding templates on the following pages. You can download the templates from the Certified Aftercare Specialist™ portal using the credentials listed at the beginning of this manual.



PLAN

1. Assign lead coordinator and refreshment coordinator.
2. Choose dates, time and location.
 - a. Plan one year in advance.
 - b. Schedule event one week before Thanksgiving or first week in December.
 - c. Ensure a location with ample parking that is well lit, easy to find, and accessible.
 - d. Provide directions and sandwich board signage.
3. Create program. See sample.
4. Select program readers.
5. Select music accompaniments or performers.
6. Decide on refreshments. Recommend bottled water, coffee, tea.

PREPARE

7. Create program flyer. See sample.
8. Purchase:
 - a. Clear glass ornaments/momentoes
 - b. Paint pens
 - c. Small gift bags for ornaments
 - d. Holiday display tree
 - e. Refreshments/food
9. Prepare, print and send out invites.
 - a. Send to all families By November 1
 - b. Notify local newspapers By November 1
 - c. Notify local radio stations By November 1
 - d. Notify local TV stations By November 1
 - e. Post posters and/or flyers By November 1
10. Reconfirm location, program and music participants
11. Prepare ornaments by writing loved one's names, then rebox for easy transfer.

LEAD

12. One day prior to event, set up display tree with ornaments.
13. Arrive 60 minutes prior to event.
14. Set up room and display programs.
 - a. Side table for sign-in, programs, handouts
 - b. Set up refreshments
 - c. Adjust room lighting. Keep it sufficiently light but not bright.
15. Greet participants. Have guests sign in.
16. Start on time.

17. Welcome.

- a. Introduce coordinators.
- b. Share housekeeping information.
- c. Workshop program: Offer tips and strategies for coping with the holidays. Refer to the Resilience Rx™ Coping with the Holidays PDF for ideas.
- d. Sharing circle: Conduct a 60-minute sharing circle to help participants share their holiday struggles.
- e. Candlelight ceremony: Refer to Community Vigil instructions in this manual for how to conduct a candlelight ceremony, and modify as needed.
- f. At the end, have someone read each one of the loved one's names while handing out ornaments.
- g. Close.
- h. Proceed to refreshment area.

SAMPLE HOLIDAY FLYER TEMPLATE

