Cultural Diversity in Grief Support

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Grief is a multi-faceted response to loss, particularly to the loss of someone or something to which a bond was formed. Although conventionally focused on the emotional response to loss, it also has physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, and philosophical dimensions. While the terms are often used interchangeably, bereavement refers to the state of loss, and grief is the reaction to loss (Wikipedia, Retrieved March 23, 2013).

Grief is a universal reaction to a loss of a family member or significant other. How one grieves the loss of a loved one is very subjective and therefore grief work is not a universal concept. Grief is complex and can come with many different emotions such as anger and sadness. Grief responses vary from individual to individual, by culture and across times (Spiwak, Sareen, Elias, Martens, Munro & Bolton, 2012). There are many variables that influence the way an individual grieves the loss of a significant other. An individual’s age, gender, cultural beliefs and practices, social class, presence and strength of spiritual systems and external and internal support systems will shape one’s coping process (Martin & Doka, 2000, p.20). During the grieving process individuals’ attempt to maintain his or her assumptive worlds prior to the loss, learn to adjust to his or her new emerging reality and start to incorporate his or her new reality into the evolving assumptive worlds (Martin et al. 2000). The meaning one gives to a loss and the meaning of one’s reality will be influenced by personal values and beliefs that are guided by the culture that one lives in.

Members of the dominant culture in society are unaware that he or she has a culture and a way of grieving that may be different from members of other cultures. The grieving process in Western culture is seen as normal to individuals who were brought up in the dominant culture. Members of minority cultures in society are more aware of culture and its influence as he or she struggle with the values and beliefs of his or her culture while living in a dominant culture that has alternate grieving norms (Swallow, 2012). “Western values, which view grieving as largely an individual experience, are not shared by all cultures”, a cross cultural perspective highlights that some people view grief as a shared experience (Spiwak et al, 2012, p.205). Some cultures value the collective experience of grief over that of an individuals’ personal level of coping. It is important to note that grieving rules vary within a society and by ethnicity as different subcultures have their own distinct ways that individual's in the group express grief (Martin et al., 2000).

Cultural norms influence the experience and expression of grief. Culture influences the response to life events as it shapes one’s values, beliefs, and customs and provides a sense of membership within a group (Florelli & Jenkins, 2009). However, “cultural groups are not homogeneous, and individual variation must always be considered in situations of death, grief, and bereavement” (Clements, Vigil, Manno, Heng, Wilks, Kellywood and Foster, 2003, p. 19). Further exploration and research is required to fully appreciate and understand the role of cultural heritage in individuals’ experience of grief and mourning (Clements et al, 2003). Cross culturally people have different beliefs and understandings about death, what he or she feel, why he or she have certain feelings and reactions, which leads to questioning if the feelings he
or she have are appropriate and how do he or she express these thoughts and feelings (Rosenbaltt, 1993).

**Cultural Diversity in Grief Support**

Clements et al. (2003) states that “all cultures have developed methods for adaptive coping, grief, and mourning” and with lack of sensitivity to these practices by health care professionals, inappropriate techniques may be used that could interfere with the clients grieving process (Clements et al., 2003, p.20). Health care professionals providing grief support need to be considerate and respect the culturally appropriate beliefs and rituals clients have in order to process his or her grief. Professionals may need to adjust the grief model used in sessions to accommodate each individual’s cultural diverse background to ensure the client’s needs are being met in processing the grief experience. Health care professionals can gain significant information by inquiring about a client’s customs and rituals surrounding death and grief. “By assessing and facilitating culturally appropriate grieving practices, health care professionals can promote integration of the loss and reinvestment in life” for their clients (Clements et al., 2003,p.25).

Health care professionals can facilitate open dialogue with clients to gain an understanding for his or her customs, rituals and beliefs that shape the clients individual experiences of death, grief and bereavement. Machin (2009) emphasizes the importance of a health care professional exploring the psychological, philosophical and socially constructed perspectives of cultures death rituals as it serves for a rite of passage in the grieving process. Rituals provide individuals with a framework in which grief can be expressed. Philosophically cultures provide meaning of the death and grief experience that guide individual grieving processes. Socially, culture delegates the norms of social etiquette and behavior during mourning and is the context which grief is experienced (Machin, 2009). “An analysis of individuals from specific cultures reveals that individual's intrapersonal experiences of grief are similar across cultural boundaries. In order for health care providers to provide culturally sensitive care, the health care provider must possess an understanding of cultural practices and how they impact the overall grief experience of the patient” (Hardy-Bougere, 2008, p.66). Categorizing grief responses of cultural groups allows professionals a starting point to understanding the grief experiences of an individual within a group (Florelli et al. 2009). Nonetheless health care professions need to recognize individual perspectives and that culture evolve overtime as members are exposed to new perspectives and experiences that will influence individual grieving responses.

**Environmental Scan**

The culture and rituals around death in Canada shifted at the turn of the 20th century. By the 1970’s, approximately 70% of deaths in Canada occurred in health care institutions instead of individual’s private homes (Dudgeon & Kristjanson, 1995). The Canadian Institute for Health Information continues to report that more than half of the people who died in Western Canada
in 2003-2004 died in a hospital (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2007). The shift in western society for people to die in a health care institution and amongst unfamiliar health care staff impacts the bereavement and grief process for individuals.

This environmental scan will provide an overview of health care institutes in 4 major cities in Canada specifically considering the accessibility of cultural diverse grief support services.

Vancouver, British Columbia

Population: 603,502 (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census)

The 5 highest mother tongue languages identified by resident of the City of Vancouver are: Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Filipino, Punjabi, Vietnamese and Spanish (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census).

The Vancouver Coastal Health authority provides health care services in Vancouver, Richmond, North and West Vancouver and along the Sky Highway, Sunshine Coast and BC’s Central Coast. This health authority provides interpretive and translation services for health care providers to communicate with patients and families who have limited English. The health authority also has a Patient Health Education Materials Catalogue of health care materials in different languages. Health care providers are also able to access Francophone Health Resources when working with francophone clients. The Vancouver Coastal Health authority does not provide any specific grief support programs within the organization. Community organizations in the City of Vancouver provide help lines, individual, family and group counselling for individuals dealing with the death of a loved one. Many of these organizations advertise that they provide services in different languages (see APPENDIX A).

Calgary, Alberta

Population: 1,096,833 (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census)

The 5 highest mother tongue languages identified by residents of the City of Calgary are: Punjabi, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Filipino, Spanish and Arabic (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census).

Alberta Health Services- Calgary Zone provides health care services to the residents of the City of Calgary and surrounding communities. The health region provides interpretive and translation services for health care providers to access when working with clients, patients and families who have limited English. Alberta Health Services- Calgary Zone provides a Grief Support program specifically for individuals who are grieving the death of a family member or significant other. This program provides individual and group counselling sessions covered by
Alberta Health Care. Community organizations also provide individual, family and group sessions. Limited information on services offered in different languages is available (see APPENDIX B).

**Toronto, Ontario**

Population: 2,615,060 (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census)

The 5 highest mother tongue languages identified by residents of the City of Toronto are: Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Italian, Spanish, Filipino and Tamil (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census).

The University Health Network consists of the Toronto General Hospital, Toronto Western Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital and provides health care services across these campuses to residents of the City of Toronto. The health network provides interpretation and translation services to health care providers in-house and by request. The in house interpreters provide services in Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish and are located at each facility. The Toronto General Hospital provides a Bereavement Support Group that offers support to individuals who have experienced the death of a significant other. The group meets weekly on a drop in basis. Community organizations provide, telephone support, individual, family and group support. Programs in the community did not specify if they provided services in other languages (see APPENDIX C).

**Montreal, Quebec**

Population: 1,649,519 (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census)

The 5 highest mother tongue languages identified by residents of the City of Montreal are: Arabic, Italian, Spanish, Creoles, and Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin) (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census).

The McGill University Health Centre consists of 5 teaching hospitals affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine of McGill University. The 5 hospitals are: Montreal Chest Institute, Montreal Children’s Hospital Site, Montreal Neurological Hospital, Montreal General Hospital and the Royal Victoria Hospital. Health care services at these facilities are provided in English and French. The McGill University Health Centre site makes note of trying to accommodate other languages, but no interpreter or translation services are specifically provided through the health region. Members of the general public are required to seek assistance through the Government of Quebec- Health and Social Services Centres (Centres de santé et de services sociaux- CSSS) if he or she requires interpretation. The Health and Social Services Centres provide interpretation services for individuals with limited English and French language skills.
The McGill University Health Centre does not provide direct grief and loss support to patients and clients. Programs in the community offer support by telephone, individual, family and group environment (see APPENDIX D).

**Discussion**

The environmental scan provides an overview of the supports available to culturally diverse individuals in health care systems in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal. The health authorities provided direct interpretation and translation services or have a system in place for clients of the system to access resources. The University Health Network in Toronto has identified the importance and need of interpretation services in the network by having in house interpreters available to staff and clients in several different languages. Incorporating this service into health care provides responsive and quality health care communication to diverse populations. Vancouver and Calgary’s health authorities provide 24/7 telephone interpretive services as well as by request face to face interpretation to meet the needs of the population they serve. The McGill University Health Centre does not have a direct interpretive and translation services for the residents of Montreal. The Health and Social Services Centres are able to provide interpretive services for clients in the health care system but seeking this assistance is a client driven process that could provide barriers to accessing and receiving appropriate services in the correct language.

All of the health authorities provide spiritual care and support services to patients, family members and health care staff. Alberta Health Services- Calgary and the University Health Network- Toronto provide specific support services for individuals grieving the death of a family member or significant other. The Grief Support program through Alberta Health Services provides the most comprehensive and structured support for individuals in the health authorities of this environmental scan. This is a health care organization that supports and values the service for the residents in the region. The program offers individual counselling and structured group sessions to meet individual needs. The University Health Network- Toronto also supports a program within the organization. The Bereavement Support program is an open group that operates on a weekly drop-in basis. Health care authorities can continue the continuity of care by providing such programs within their organizations. However, these programs need to be culturally sensitive to be inviting to the communities they serve. It is also important to note that the interactions and experiences an individual has with the health care system during the death of a loved one many influence his or her decision to seek out further support from the organization.

The cities captured in the environmental scan have many programs that address grief and loss support at the community level. These programs offer services at the individual, family and group level to accommodate individual needs. Some of the programs in the community
specifically inform clients that they offer services to culturally diverse group and in different languages. The additional support to culturally diverse populations provides an inviting environment for all individuals to seek support and services.

**Implications for Health Care Providers**

“Health care professional work with an incredible variety of people on a continuous basis from different cultures, speaking different languages, and having a variety of different understandings of illness, health and healing” (Alberta Health Services, 2012, p.1). In order for organizations and health care providers to truly provide culturally competent and inclusive services the organizational structure and institutional culture must be addressed (Strier & Binyamin, 2009). The organizational structure and values will influence the type of services available to meet the needs of culturally diverse populations. Health care providers have an obligation to advocate and support working with diverse populations which will influence and shift the culture he or she work in. Furthermore, culturally competent providers “are sensitive to the institutional barriers that prevent minorities from accessing and utilizing bereavement services” (Florelli et al, 2009, p.30).

Health care providers need to evaluate his or her beliefs and have a clear understanding of what is expected in his or her job performance at an organizational, professional and personal level (Hardy- Bougere, 2008). Culturally competent clinicians are aware of his or her client’s culture and spirituality. Practitioners are able to establish rapport, acceptance and empathy in the working relationship. Counsellors need to be aware of cultural differences, be open and flexible in his or her approach and listen and validate the grief experience of each individual client (Swallow, 2012). Puchalski (2001) emphasizes the importance of clinicians taking a spiritual history of each client. A spiritual history includes learning about a client’s faith and belief system, the importance and influence of that system and the community with which one shares and practices his or her spiritual beliefs. Obtaining a spiritual history allows a counsellor to be attentive to the body, mind and spirit of the client he or she is working with (Puchalski, 2001).

**Practical Recommendations for Health Care Providers**

The following are practical recommendations for health care providers to consider when working with clients of culturally diverse backgrounds:

- Always ask questions, never assume cultural values and beliefs of a client
- Ask about customs and rituals around death and grieving
- Use interpretive services when appropriate and available
- Collaborate with community agencies to support each other as service providers working with culturally diverse populations
• Refer clients to community agencies as appropriate
• Engage in reflective practice at a personal and professional level
• Use clinical supervision to discuss culturally diverse cases
• Seek opportunities for professional development in cultural competency
• Read books and journal articles on cultural diverse spirituality, rituals and ceremony
• Be sensitive to language used in promotional materials
• Increase awareness of services amongst health care professionals and community agencies
APPENDIX A

VANCOUVER

Vancouver Coastal Health
http://www.vch.ca

Vancouver Coastal Health provides services in Vancouver, Richmond, North and West Vancouver and along the sea to Sky Highway, Sunshine Coast and BC’s Central Coast. This health authority serves 25% of British Columbia’s population. Vancouver Coastal Health offers spoken language interpreters for health care staff to access when communicating with patients who have limited English. The health region has developed a Patient Health Education Materials Catalogue that contains brochures, pamphlets and booklets translated in different languages. There are also Francophone Health Resources available to staff working with and for clients of the Francophone population.

The Vancouver Coastal Health authority does not provide any specific grief support programs within the organization. The following are programs that the health authority provides as resources to the Vancouver area population:

**BC Bereavement HelpLine Toll-free: 1-877-779-2223**
Box 53530, 984 W. Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1K7
http://www.bcbereavementhelpline.com/index.php
The BC Bereavement Helpline is a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to the healthy and wholesome recovery of individuals experiencing grief. They provide the public and particularly the bereaved with information on how to seek help for themselves or individuals known to them who are in need of assistance through their grief. Services include a helpline for referral and support, a community network of support and information and brochure of available support in B.C. On line brochures are available in Chinese, English, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese at:
http://www.bcbereavementhelpline.com/resources/

**Patient and Family Counselling Services 604-877-6000 local 2194**
600 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4E6 Toll-free: 1-800-663-3333 ext 2194

**Chinese Counselling 604-877-6000 local 2375**
The counselling services have professionally trained counsellors who provide practical assistance related to travel, finances, accommodation and counselling available to individuals, couples and families. As well, programs such as Art Therapy, Music Therapy and Relaxation Programs are available. Bilingual staff provides counseling in English, Cantonese and Mandarin. Interpreters are available upon request from a staff health care provider.
Living Through Loss Counselling Society of BC
http://www.ltlc.bc.ca/
#206-1651 Commercial Dr, Vancouver BC V5L 3Y3 604-873-5013
The society is a non-profit organization that provides professional grief counselling to adults and children who have experienced any type of loss. The United Way provides partial funding, private donations, corporate sponsors, society members and fees provide the balance. The program offers individual counselling at a reduced rate of $95/hr due to partial funding. Staff consists of Registered Clinical Counsellors and Registered Social Workers who are certified grief counsellors. Group sessions (6 weeks) are available for individuals who have experienced a loss through death. Bereavement training is also available to professionals for therapists that want to explore bereavement issues related to their clients, including bereavement basics, suicide, homicide, cultural perspectives and multiple losses.

Lower Mainland Grief Recovery Society
http://www.lmgr.ca/programs.htm
2490 W. 37th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6M 1P5 604-696-1060
The society offers Grief Recovery Programs designed for those who have suffered the death of a significant person. Groups are led by facilitators trained in grief support and provide education and support in a group setting.
APPENDIX B

CALGARY

Alberta Health Services- Calgary Zone
http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/5826.asp

Alberta Health Services delivers medical care on behalf of the Government of Alberta's Department of Health throughout the province, including hospitals, clinics, continuing care facilities, mental health facilities, community health sites and by providing a variety of programs and services. Alberta Health Services is the single health authority for the province of Alberta. The Calgary Zone of Alberta Health Services provides health care to the residents of Calgary and surrounding area. Interpretation and Translation services are available to health care providers to ensure communication between providers, clients and family needs are met. The services of a certified health care interpreter are available in person or over the phone.

Alberta Health Services- Calgary Zone has a program specifically to assist individuals with the death of a loved one.

Grief Support Program- Alberta Health Services- Calgary Zone
Richmond Road Diagnostic & Treatment Centre (RRDTC)
3rd Floor- 1820 Richmond Road SW, Calgary, AB T2T 5C7  403-955-8011
http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/4072.asp

The Grief Support program provides individual counselling and/or groups sessions to adults (over 18) who have experienced the death of a family member or a significant other. While referrals to the program can occur at any time of the grief experience, the Grief Support Program does not offer urgent crisis assessment or intervention services. Grief groups focus on the loss of a spouse, mature-usually over 55, younger- usually under 55, loss of a child, loss of parent and loss of sibling. Counsellors are professionally trained staff and the volunteers in the program receive specific training to assist with the facilitation of the group sessions. Services are covered under the Alberta Health Care program.

Grief Education is provided for health care professionals and frontline workers and the community. A full day workshop “How to Care What to Say: The Experience of Bereavement” is offered on a regular basis and offered to Alberta Health Services and contract staff. Workplace grief support/education is available on request to employees and managers who are coping with a death in the workplace. Additionally, Grief Support program staff are available to provide grief education seminars to the general public or community groups on request.
The following programs are additional grief related support programs in the city of Calgary:

**Calgary Family Services**


200, 1000 - 8th Avenue SW Calgary, AB T2P 3M7 403.269.9888

Provides counselling to everyone living in Calgary regardless of age, cultural background, race, sexual orientation or faith. Counselling is available in English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, Polish, Mandarin and Cantonese. (Fees according to client’s ability to pay)

**Calgary Counselling Centre**

Suite 200, 940 – 6 Avenue S.W., Calgary, Alberta T2P 3T1 403-265-4980


Through counseling and group programs, the Centre helps individuals, couples, parents, families, and youth resolve emotional and social problems. (Fees according to client’s ability to pay)

**Hospice Calgary**


1245-70 Avenue SE, Calgary, AB T2H 2X8 403-263-4525

Provides support for children, teenagers and families who have experienced a loss through death, whether sudden, accidental or anticipated. At Sage Centre and Rosedale Hospice, our specialists provide individual counselling, group support, workshops and 24-hour end-of-life care.
APPENDIX C

TORONTO

University Health Network
www.uhn.ca

The University Health Network (UHN) provides health care services for residents of the City of Toronto. The campus consists of the Toronto General Hospital, Toronto Western Hospital and the Princess Margaret Hospital. The UHN provides interpretation and translation services to all programs and services to facilitate communication between health care providers, patients and families. The interpreters are trained staff and are available to staff by request. The facilities in the campus have in-house interpretive staff for the following languages: Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Staff are also able to contact professional telephone based interpretation services 24 hours, 7 days a week by contacting a Language Line.

The Toronto General Hospital provides a Bereavement Support Group that offers support to individuals who have experienced the death of a significant other. The program is in a group setting and is by self-referral. The group meets on Tuesday evenings from 6:00-7:30pm.

The following programs are additional grief related resources for residents of Toronto:

Bereaved Families of Ontario- Toronto
http://www.bfotoronto.ca
80 Woodlawn Ave. E., Toronto, ON M4T 1W6  416-440-0290
This program provides family mutual support groups for individuals that have experienced the death of a loved one. The groups are co-facilitated by bereaved volunteer and supported by professional advisors. The groups accommodate individuals who have lost an infant child, child, sibling, spouse and loss of a parent for children, youth and adults. The organization also provides Telephone Information Support 416-440-0290 Monday thru Thursday from 10am to 4:30pm to provide brief support and resource counseling.

Hospice Association of Ontario
http://www.hospice.on.ca/results.php
416-304-1477
Provides information/referral on bereavement support groups. Available through local hospices.

The Canadian Centre for Bereavement Education
Provides individual, couple, family and group counseling and bereavement support.
416-926-0905
The McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) is located in Montreal and consists of five teaching hospitals affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine of McGill University. The campus includes the Montreal Chest Institute, Montreal Children’s Hospital, Montreal General Hospital, Montreal Neurological Hospital and the Royal Victoria Hospital. The McGill University Health Centre provides services in English and French. The health authority does not provide direct interpretation and translation services. Residents of Montreal that have limited knowledge of English and French are required to contact the Government of Quebec- Health and Social Services Centres (Centres de santé et de services sociaux – CSSS) to request an interpreter, additional information can be accessed at the program website: [http://www.santemontreal.qc.ca/en/support-services/interpreters/](http://www.santemontreal.qc.ca/en/support-services/interpreters/).

The McGill University Health Centre does not provide any specific grief support programs within the organization. The following are programs that the health authority provides as resources to the Montreal population:

**St. Mary’s Hospital Centre- Bereavement Program**
3830 Lacombe Avenue, Montreal, QC H3T 1M5 514-345-3511 ext. 5744
This program was created to assist families of deceased patients through cooperative efforts of staff and volunteers. The goal is to provide compassionate help after the loss of a loved one, by offering support through telephone contact during the grieving process.

**Bereavement Centre - McGill School of Social Work**
(514) 398-7067
The Centre for Grief and Bereavement has an open population, with support groups for loss; pregnancy and birth, sibling or spouse, family survivors of suicide, and other presenting needs. Free

**Bereavement Support Groups**
This program is offered by the Argyle Institute of Human Relations. They offer an 8-week general grief support group for adults and a young adult grief support group on Monday evenings from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. Cost $25 per session.
APPENDIX E

Alberta Health Services- Grief Support Program- Calgary Zone

Alberta Health Services- Grief Support Program provides grief counselling to adults (over 18 years) who have faced the death of a family member or significant other. Clients can contact the program directly at any time during their grief experience. The program does not offer urgent crisis assessment or intervention services. The program is currently staffed with 3.3 FTE Counsellors, 0.6 FTE Educator and 0.5 FTE Clerk for the receptionist desk by Alberta Health Services. The program utilizes donated funds to sustain the demand for individual counselling, group sessions and education needs by staffing an additional 0.8 FTE Counsellor, 0.5 Clerk and 0.4 Educator.

The program offers confidential individual counselling, grief support groups and education to the community. Individual counselling is offered by counsellors in the program for approximately up to 8 sessions based on individual client needs. The Grief Support groups are held once a week, every week for 6 week sessions. Each session is 2 hours. The groups are led by a counsellor from the program and trained volunteers. The group sessions provide education about the grief process and provide support. The program has an educator that provides bereavement education to the public, community and Alberta Health Services staff.

The following impressions are from 7 staff members from Alberta Health Services – Grief Support Program around the process of providing grief support to diverse populations from their personal experience and general impressions of those with whom they work with.

Individuals contact the program directly to access services. A brief intake is completed to capture the type of loss and the time frame of the loss the client is grieving. Counsellors are provided with the information about the loss and the clients name, age, sex, contact information and Alberta Health Care number prior to meeting with a client. All clients are seen at least once by a counsellor prior to attend a Grief Support group to ensure it is an appropriate setting for sharing and processing his or her grief. The number of sessions a client attends is negotiated between the client and counsellor on a case by case basis. The program is intended to be short term counselling with approximately 6-8 sessions. The program is a non-fee program the individual and groups sessions are covered by Alberta Health Care.

The program currently collects the client’s age and gender for the purpose of demographic statistics. During 2011/12 the majority of the clients served in the program were: female (76%) and 26% of the clients were in their 50’s (see Appendix G & H). The program is open to everyone and does serve diverse age groups, cultures, spiritual and socioeconomic backgrounds. However, race, culture and religion of the clients are not captured demographically. Staff at the program recognize and appreciate that each individual client is unique and how they deal with the loss of a loved one will be very personal. The grief counsellors encourage clients to tell their story in order to gain an understanding of the client’s loss and grieving process. Counsellors ask questions and explore how grief is expressed in the
diverse cultures of clients they work with. Staff members at the program are open to working with diverse cultures and view those different from their own as an opportunity to learn.

Counsellors attempt to accommodate clients by using Alberta Health Services Interpreters and Alberta Health Services Aboriginal Liaison as appropriate and required when providing services to culturally diverse clients. Counsellors make an effort to consult with colleagues, resources, and community organizations when presented with a client of a different cultural background than their own and to better understand the clients served. Counsellors are open to receiving culturally diverse education to be sensitive to client’s needs and to enhance the programs overall practice. Grief Support staff recognize the importance of providing culturally competent support and the need to connect with community partners to gain cultural understanding and awareness of community resources for diverse populations.
APPENDIX F

Alberta Health Services- Interpretation and Translation Services- Calgary Zone

Alberta Health Services - Interpretation and Translation services program employs full time, part-time and casual Certified healthcare interpreters that accounts for 21 FTE’s. The interpretation services team provides interpretation for health care providers working for Alberta Health Services to facilitate effective communication with their clients. These interpreters receive training specific to their roles and the languages that they interpret for. The program only provides language services for healthcare providers and programs within Alberta Health Services. Alberta Health Services staff are able to request and arrange for face to face services for interpretation. Over-the-phone interpretation services are also available in 200 languages, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Interpretation and Translation Services is also available to translate written documents such as brochures and other printed materials. The six most common languages for translation in the Calgary area are Arabic, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin) and Spanish.

Referrals for interpretive services are received by the program’s dispatch team to set up the appointments. Interpreters are provided with an intake sheet that provides the clients name, age, Alberta Health Care number, phone number and the format of the service ie. face to face or telephone conversation. Interpreters arrive at appointments with minimal information and context for the meetings they are interpreting for. Interpreters are trained to provide word for word interpretation for health care providers in the requested language to ensure the quality of care clients receive in the health care system. Interpreters have provided debriefing with staff after appointments to answer questions, clarify the conversations and to provide education on cultural cues and understanding. Interpretive staff value health care staff’s appreciation for other cultures and wanting to communicate and understand their client’s value and belief systems. Debriefing with health care staff also provides support to interpretive staff who have been a part of significant and private conversations.

The following impressions are from 3 interpreters from Alberta Health Services around the process of providing interpretive services from their personal experience with grief and loss and general impressions of those with whom they work with.

Alberta Health Services Grief Support program was known to 2 out of 3 interpreters involved in this conversation. Interpreters have not often been requested to provide interpretation for the program as the populations they provide services for do not typically discuss grief and loss with in a structured setting. General reasons expressed by this group is that culturally diverse clients may not seek support from Alberta Health Services Grief Support program as seeking support from an individual outside of the community is unfamiliar, attending counselling is a western belief and practice, grief is difficult to define and individuals may not be able to understand and appreciate the services available to them in this setting and everyday priorities such as work do not allow for time for attending appointments. The overall impression presented was that individuals cope and grieve the loss of a loved one with the
support of family and extended community. However, it was also noted that each individual is unique and culturally may be expected to grieve and be supported amongst community members but individually they seek to grieve privately. Health care providers providing support to individuals of culturally diverse backgrounds ought to ask questions to understand one’s cultural background, rituals and religious/spiritual values and beliefs around death and allow clients the opportunity to tell their story.
2011/12 – GSP Client Gender

female, 707, 76%

male, 229, 24%
2011/12 – GSP Client Age

- 30s, 128, 13%
- 40s, 194, 21%
- 50s, 246, 26%
- 60s, 122, 13%
- 70s, 75, 8%
- 80s, 27, 3%
- 90+, 7, 1%
- 15+, 20, 2%
- 20s, 119, 13%

*** 2011/2012 Grief Support Program Annual Report***
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