



October 4, 2021

Dear Center Family,

As groups start back up after August break, I wish I could delightfully be sharing that families are once again holding hands in the Big Room's opening circle. However, to protect everyone's health and do our part to slow the spread of the Delta variant, I am writing instead to share that after careful consideration, we are delaying reopening plans until January 2022 at the earliest.

While this may be disheartening for some, I want you to know that this was not an easy decision. It takes into account feedback received from families and volunteers, the reality that we serve children 3-11 years old who currently have no vaccine options, and the rising numbers of COVID-19 cases in Maine.

I am proud of how well our families, staff and volunteer facilitators have adapted in an entirely virtual format. While it's difficult to replicate face-to-face support, our amazing Center team still served 621 children, teens, and adults in our last fiscal year through our virtual Bereavement, Tender Living Care (TLC) and Intercultural peer support groups.

Even when virtual, our families report feeling relieved to be able to share their grief and experiences with others.

Since moving peer support groups to virtual, parents and caregivers have shared:

- 82% feel better able to support their child/children in their grief
- 91% feel the information received from the Center is helpful
- 89% believe peer support groups have helped their child/children feel more connected and less isolated

When the time comes to begin reopening, we have plans in place to keep our families and children as safe as possible. As January nears, I will update our community on these details. In the meantime, please reach out to me or any Center staff member to ask questions, provide feedback, or seek clarity.

I want you to know, whether in-person or online, the goal of our family-model peer support groups will always be to help grieving children 1) Increase their ability to safely express feelings around death, grief and loss, 2) Reduce feelings of isolation, 3) Increase hopefulness, and 4) Ensure children are well supported by educating adults in their lives about grief and loss.

I am so grateful for your patience and support as we work through this tough time together.

With love,

Anne Heros



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