

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/childhood-loss-and-behavioral-problems-loosening-the-links>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

A growing body of evidence suggests that schools and other child-serving systems can help young people with behavioral problems by asking whether they have lost someone they love and responding constructively when answers suggest a child is grieving. Such actions could influence whether a child's behavioral problems spiral into ever wider levels of misbehavior or subside with appropriate help in confronting the challenges of their loss. In 2003, staff at the Vera Institute of Justice began working with a small number of intermediate and elementary schools in New York City to explore the links between loss and student misbehavior. Vera's goal was to identify students who had lost a loved one and develop therapeutic responses to help them. This report, which draws upon existing research, promising practices, and the experience of Vera personnel, is designed to increase policymakers' and practitioners' awareness of how the loss of a loved one influences children's behavioral problems. It also offers suggestions on how to identify grieving children and intervene in cycles of misbehavior tied to grief.

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