

# Play Therapy – Outreach to Children & Teens

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Nanaimo Community Hospice Society  
Nanaimo, BC

# Play Therapy - Outreach



## In a Nutshell

Provide outreach to schools (via a dedicated RV) to children and youth

RV purchased and refitted to have a play therapy room

Capital campaign raised money for RV, improved youth website and other resources, and 3-years operating funding

Use play, art and psychosocial therapy with professional counsellors

These tools allow for a full expression and exploration

Most services 1 on 1; some siblings, some group therapy

Referrals from schools, families, doctors, churches and community agencies



# More about the program

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Strategic Plan – go beyond the usual demographic, remove barriers to accessing hospice services

Philosophy – “if children are old enough to love, they are old enough to grieve”

Easier to raise funds for capital items for kids

Outreach will make services more accessible

Play therapy – art supplies, sand trays, punching bags, toys, figurines, etc. – allows child or youth to tell story without necessarily talking

Also reaching out to other underserved populations, e.g. homeless community





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**Death from drug  
overdose affects  
everybody.**

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# Marketing



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Menu



Child & Youth Grief Support

## Child Grief

Who has left your life – mommy, daddy, grandma, grandpa, an auntie or uncle, someone you care about?

**If children are old enough to love, they are old enough to grieve.** Children grieve in waves and the intensity, duration and frequency of these waves are neither linear nor predictable.



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People served	Children (youngest client is 3) Youth Also, outreach to other underserved populations, e.g. homeless community
Referrals	Schools, families, doctors, churches, community agencies Important to have a relationship with the school district Youth 16 and over can refer themselves
Staffing	Play therapist (Nanaimo Hospice has 2 on staff) Trained volunteer to accompany the therapist in RV
Costs	Can do a scaled down version targeting children and youth without the RV (recommend having play therapy room at hospice as well) Costs increase with professional staff (i.e. play therapists) RV + modification + operating funding for 3 years was \$85,000 Plus volunteer time
Marketing	Promote at Professional Development days Presentations to schools, parents' groups Promote at adult grief support groups

# Resources Needed

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# Lessons learned/ Wisdom

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- ❖ Success rides on the ability to make connections with youth
- ❖ Use capital campaign to raise operating funds as well (roll in to be part of total budget)
- ❖ Different creative therapies – stories, play, art – allow full exploration of grief for those not capable of conversations
- ❖ The RV travels once a week; have a trained volunteer accompany the therapist to ensure child/youth safety
- ❖ Many images convey hospice as a seniors' organization - need to improve youth resources, including a youth website
- ❖ Most referrals come through presentations to schools, parents referring students and parents who have gone through grief support programs – “If you are here, how are your kids doing? Who are they talking to?”