

FAMILY DYNAMICS FOLLOWING A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MURDER-SUICIDE

When a domestic violence murder-suicide occurs, multiple family members and, many times, multiple families are left devastated. The tragedy can cause strain and even turmoil in family relationships, adding stress to children and families already experiencing crisis.

FAMILY LOYALTIES

Family members may have different perspectives depending on the circumstances of the murder-suicide. Family members may want to assign blame. While this is normal, it can impact children who may feel conflicted in their loyalties and are attached to both parents.

SIBLINGS

Siblings may have different perspectives based on their individual relationships with their deceased parents. In the aftermath of the tragedy, they may be split up and live in different homes. Maintaining sibling connections may provide support and help with healing.

NEW CAREGIVERS

Grandparents or other relatives may be called on to raise surviving children. These new caregivers can benefit from organizations that specialize in supporting these new family dynamics.

CUSTODY AND GUARDIANSHIP

Multiple family members may seek custody of the children. These custody challenges may prolong the children's adjustment and can impact their emotional well-being. Mediation can be helpful to decide the best interest for the children.

CAREGIVER'S GRIEF

A caregiver's own grief and trauma may impact their caregiving capacity. Caregivers may not want to discuss what happened or the people who died, or they may share detailed accounts of the murder-suicide. When caregivers receive their own support, they are better able to support the children. Consider talking to a therapist specializing in grief and trauma.

SECONDARY LOSS

In addition to the loss of parents and other family members, children may also face the loss of their home, school, and friends. Recognition of these additional losses validates a child's feelings. Children may feel sad if they are not allowed to talk about the people and things they've lost. When possible, try to retrieve mementos and pictures for them to keep.

NEW NORMAL

It may take a while, but families who survive a murder-suicide will eventually establish a new normal. Children feel most secure when they know what to expect day to day. Having routines can help children feel safe and secure.

Contact our program for support and help locating additional resources.

 **Kate's Club** (404) 347-7619
katesclub.org

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Commission on
Family
Violence** 404-657-3412
gcfv.ga.gov

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