1ST YEAR

widows ministry

TABLE OF *contents*

Developing your 1st Response Team

1st Response Team Supplies

1st Response Team Steps Checklist

Basket Supplies Checklist

1st Year Training Overview and Document

Month-By-Month Overview and Roadmap

Going Forward After The 1st Year

Training - 1st year

DEVELOPING YOUR 1ST RESPONSE TEAM *checklist*

- [ ] Share the process with the current widows in your ministry.

- [ ] Identify those who are in a place of giving out and approach them with the opportunity of being a part. If you are starting your ministry, you may want to present at Coffee, Cake, and Conversation and see if they want to get involved.

  Ensure them they will not be alone.

- [ ] Train your team - Please see training document for some helpful information on how and what to train them in.

- [ ] Inform your pastors/church staff of who is on the on-call/1st response list and how to contact them.

DEVELOPING COFFEE, CAKE, AND CONVERSATION

there will be a team to pick up what they cannot do and they will never go to a new widow's home alone. If you're a new church partner, share at Coffee, Cake, and Conversation.

1ST RESPONSE TEAM SUPPLIES *checklist*

These are just suggestions- please adapt to the needs you see and the budget you have.

- [ ] Paper towels
- [ ] Paper plates
- [ ] Paper bowls
- [ ] Napkins
- [ ] Storage bags/containers

  You could write scriptures/ encouraging words on the lids of storage containers.
- [ ] Small water bottles
- [ ] Toilet paper
- [ ] Plastic cutlery
- [ ] Plastic cups
- [ ] Trash bags
- [ ] Optional list of on-call volunteers
- [ ] Tissues
- [ ] Tin with encouraging scriptures inside.

  Sometimes picking up their Bible and focusing is hard, so this can be very helpful.

1ST RESPONSE TEAM STEPS *checklist*

- [ ] 1. 1st Response team is informed of new widow

- [ ] 2. Decide who will respond

  Decide if a current widow has an experience that might help form a connection and give the best support. This could be helpful, but be aware that it could also stir up trauma for this widow who is giving back.

- [ ] 3. Call widow

- [ ] 4. Grab a first response box

- [ ] 5. Team prays together before going up to the house

- [ ] 6. Care for the widow-listen & identify needs

  ***Ex: Stay at house until family arrives, clean house before people are in and out, can have someone stay at their house during the service (thieves look at funeral services and plan to go by those houses), take care of pets, drive to appointments, etc.**

- [ ] 7. Inform the widow in your care that you are there and will be following up

- [ ] 8. Follow-up based on needs (exchange phone numbers if this hasn't already been done)

  If they don't tell you what they need, try to pinpoint some areas, if nothing else, make sure to call/text to check in on them!

- [ ] 9. Fill-in (on what is appropriate and applicable) to other members of the 1st Response Team and pastoral staff so that they can show care to her as well

- [ ] 10. Follow roadmap for long-term care

BASKET SUPPLIES *checklist*

- [ ] Thank You cards and stamps
- [ ] Gift cards-examples: restaurants, Target, Walmart, activities such as the zoo, Main Event, movie theater (the activities are great if the kids are still in their home).
- [ ] Hand written card from someone who understands. This is truly the most important part of the basket.
- [ ] Self-care items (bath bombs, candles, etc.)
- [ ] Journal and pen
- [ ] Page to list those to send thank you cards to and what they did/brought
- [ ] Book(s) **See Additional Resource Section to ToolKit for ideas.**

If you do not have a card and book ministry this would be a great addition!

- [ ] Other personal item(s) examples: a necklace or something that would be meaningful.

1ST YEAR TRAINING *overview*

This training portion is intended to help you as your start this 1st year ministry, however, you may have other training resources within your church that may be helpful in this ministry, so feel free to incorporate those.

- Here are a few helpful resources as you move into this ministry to think about:
  - When you gather possible volunteers at the start of your ministry, it is a good idea to invite those who have done caregiving work at your church before. Saying things like, "If the Lord is leading you to continue this kind of work." "Do you have the bandwidth for this right now?" Have individuals reach out to them so they do not feel pressure, but are able to step in if there is a calling.

  - Notice people's strengths so that when you make the ask you can point out the skills you see in them that God can use in this ministry. Use people skillsets and interests and figure out how you can use that in this ministry.

  - "Create a plan to implement your ministry, so you're not overwhelmed about starting it all at the same time."
    - Great Podcast discussing the above things: (***The first year as a Care Coordinator with Aryana Rimson***)

  - "When you are seeking out people to be on your team look for the natural helpers. These are the people who stick around after service to chat. The ones who seem to have their finger on the pulse of members' personal lives, or who are part of the people oriented teams, like hospitality or prayer. Those who see and act on a need without being asked are the kinds of people you want on your team."
    - Taken from this article: ***3 STEPS TO BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE CARE MINISTRY IN YOUR CHURCH***

1ST YEAR TEAM TRAINING *document*

- The Bible implores us to care for widows (80 different times), so you are fulfilling those Biblical callings, by stepping into this ministry.
- This ministry will involve showing up at one of the most vulnerable moments of a widow's journey, however, showing up is the important part.
- This 1st response team should arrive in teams of at least 2 people.
- If you are bringing a supply box, take that and offer it to the widow or family member who answers the door. Introduce yourselves and tell them you are there to support them and where you are from.
- Be sensitive to those at the home, they are most likely in shock.
- Tell them you are sorry for their loss. They are prayed for and loved and that you are here for them. Do not tell them they are in a better place or any of those platitudes, just a simple I'm sorry is helpful. If you are a widow and on the team that shows up, you can tell them you understand, but otherwise do not say that.
- Understand that the widows may not be talkative or receptive, many will be in shock and will not be able to talk much or even know what they need.
- Ask questions that don't require much thinking on their part (i.e. Can I help with___,? Instead of what do you need help with?) If you see a need like a messy place or something that needs to be done around their home, make a mental note to follow up, but don't necessarily do those things that first time you visit.
- Offer to pray with them and/or their family.
- Assess from the conversations with the widow and family or friends, what the most pressing needs are and make a note of that.
- Make sure they have your phone numbers and that you have theirs.
- Ask if it is okay to check on them and how they prefer to be contacted.

- Leave when you feel the time is right (this may vary based on the situation and who is present).
- However, if they don't have anyone with them, ask them if someone is coming and if not, ask if it is okay to have some people stay with them.
- Before you leave, reiterate that your team and church are there to support them and will be checking in frequently.
- If you feel they are in immediate danger or crisis and cannot be left alone, touch base with either the coordinator or your widows ministry, a care pastor, or another trusted church staff member to get some assistance. Do not leave until a plan is in place to support them.
- Start your month-by-month roadmap from this point on with either the two who originally visited or others who are signed up to help in this ministry.
- Assure them they are loved, seen and not alone!
- You are not required or expected to be a counselor, instead someone who loves and supports them and is here in this very difficult time.

MONTH-BY-MONTH ROADMAP *overview*

The purpose of the month-by-month road map is to provide simple, intentional and consistent care to the widows in your church and community from day one.

- At Stand In The Gap, one statistic that we hear often is that over 50% of widows leave their church after the loss of a spouse. Wouldn't you want to be a part of the solution for that statistic?

- We also know that widows often feel like people surround them in the first couple of months and feel that support drops off after that time.

- We want to help you ensure that no widow feels alone in their journey and what better way to start then showing up and caring for them from the beginning?

- An organization that does amazing work to help widows, The Brave Widow, has some helpful suggestions for how to talk with widows in these first moments:
  - Often widows have a hard time asking and accepting help, so don't give up when you feel they aren't letting you in.
  - Be consistent in your help and make sure you provide specific things that you can help with.
  - Widows needs will vary, but everyone wants to know that you care and see them!

MONTH-BY-MONTH ROADMAP

overview

Your map key:

MONTHS OUT FROM THE LOSS

x

WHAT TO DO

WHAT TO SAY

[ADDITIONAL RESOURCE TOOLKIT COMPONENT]

1

Visit once this month, reach out once a week through text or call, revisit questions from first visit. At the end of the first month, make them aware of financial resources.

Reassure them they are not alone, let them know you are with them for the long haul, invite them to attend church with you or ensure they will attend with their friends/current connections, check in to see if they are eating.

RESOURCES:

- FINANCIAL RESOURCES

2

Visit once this month, reach out once a week through text or call, send basket (see supply list), provide financial and estate planning resources.

Reassure them they are not alone, let them know you are with them for the long haul, invite them to attend church with you or ensure they will attend with their friends/current connections, check in to see if they are eating.

RESOURCES:

- CARD & BOOK MINISTRY
- FINANCIAL RESOURCES

3

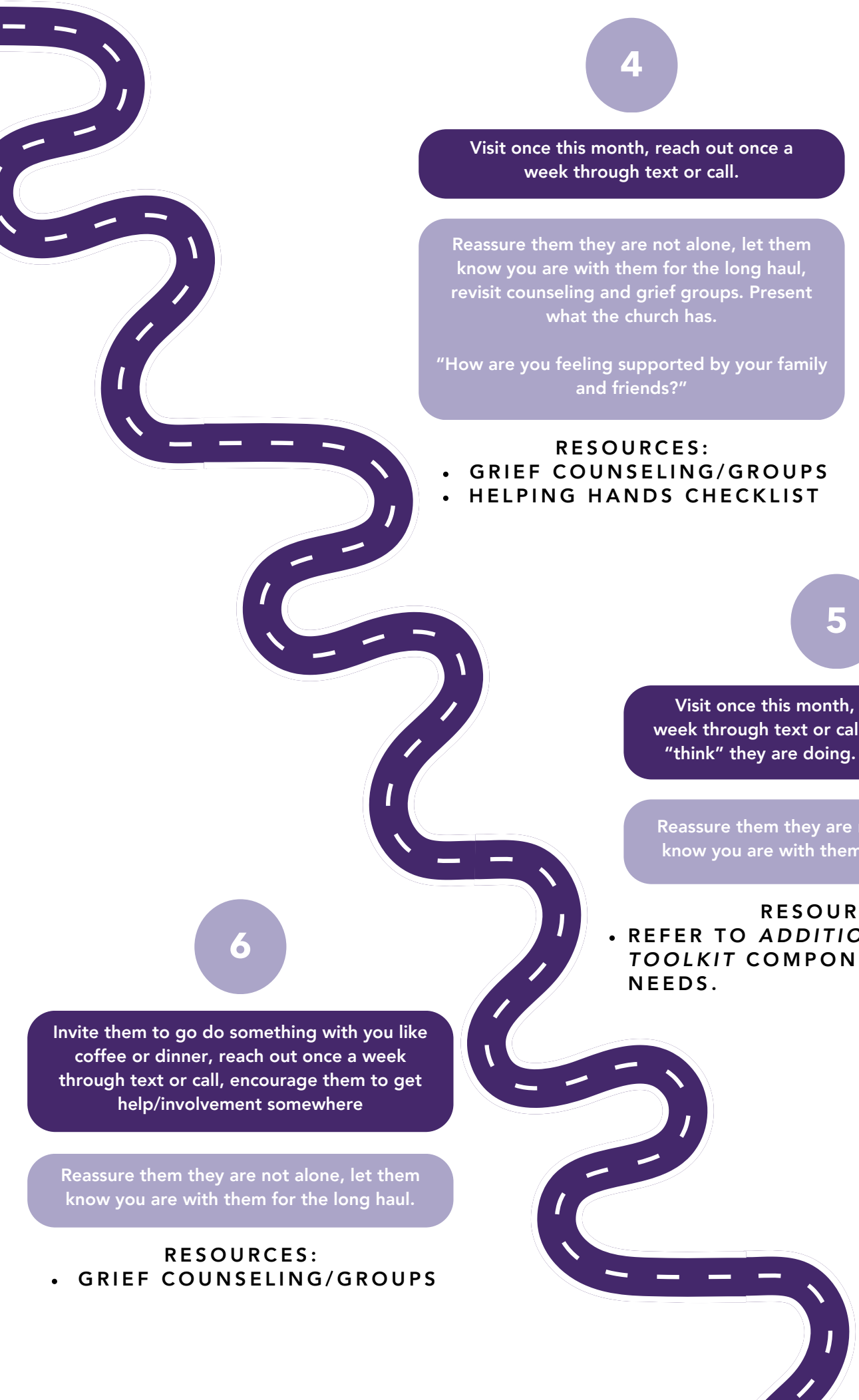
Visit once this month, reach out once a week through text or call.

Reassure them they are not alone, let them know you are with them for the long haul. ask if they are ready to go to counseling and/or a grief group. If so, provide resources.

- "How are your kids doing?"
- "How are you feeling supported by your family and friends?" (If not, then let pastors know (amount that is appropriate so they can be additional support)

RESOURCES:

- GRIEF COUNSELING/GROUPS
- HELPING HANDS CHECKLIST
- CHILDREN OF A WIDOW



4

Visit once this month, reach out once a week through text or call.

Reassure them they are not alone, let them know you are with them for the long haul, revisit counseling and grief groups. Present what the church has.

"How are you feeling supported by your family and friends?"

RESOURCES:

- GRIEF COUNSELING/GROUPS
- HELPING HANDS CHECKLIST

5

Visit once this month, reach out once a week through text or call, evaluate how you "think" they are doing. (Refer to training)

Reassure them they are not alone, let them know you are with them for the long haul.

RESOURCES:

- REFER TO *ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TOOLKIT* COMPONENT FOR ANY NEEDS.

6

Invite them to go do something with you like coffee or dinner, reach out once a week through text or call, encourage them to get help/involvement somewhere

Reassure them they are not alone, let them know you are with them for the long haul.

RESOURCES:

- GRIEF COUNSELING/GROUPS

7

Invite them to go do something with you like coffee or dinner, reach out once a week through text or call. encourage them to get help/involvement somewhere (grief share, widow's group, etc.)

Reassure them they are not alone, let them know you are with them for the long haul.

- "Have you connected with church resources, if not is there a reason?" (Leading questions).

Help connect them. Ask questions like:

- Ex 1: "What are the tasks that bog you down, cause the most stress, or you can't seem to get to?" (Brave Widow)
- Ex 2: "Will you allow someone else to do those tasks for you?" (Brave Widow)

RESOURCES:

- GRIEF COUNSELING/GROUPS

8

Invite them to go do something with you like coffee or dinner, reach out once a week through text or call, encourage them to get help/involvement somewhere (grief share, widow's group, etc.)

Reassure them they are not alone, let them know you are with them for the long haul.

RESOURCES:

- GRIEF COUNSELING/GROUPS

9

Invite them to go do something with you like coffee or dinner, reach out once a week through text or call, encourage them to get help/involvement somewhere (grief share, widow's group, etc.).

Reassure them they are not alone, let them know you are with them for the long haul.

RESOURCES:

- GRIEF COUNSELING/GROUPS

10

Invite them to go do something with you like coffee or dinner, reach out once a week through text or call, encourage them to get help/involvement somewhere (grief share, widow's group, etc.).

Reassure them they are not alone, let them know you are with them for the long haul.

RESOURCES:

- REFER TO *ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TOOLKIT* COMPONENT FOR ANY NEEDS.

11

Invite them to go do something with you like coffee or dinner, reach out once a week through text or call, encourage them to get help/involvement somewhere (grief share, widow's group, etc.).

Reassure them they are not alone, let them know you are with them for the long haul.

RESOURCES:

- GRIEF COUNSELING/GROUPS

12

Invite them to go do something with you like coffee or dinner, reach out once a week through text or call, make sure they are involved somewhere. If not, then continue to care for them and connect with a pastor on how to get them connected.

Reassure them they are not alone, let them know you are with them for the long haul.

RESOURCES:

- GRIEF COUNSELING/GROUPS

GOING FORWARD AFTER THE *first year*

One thing most widows who have made it past the first year of loss will say is that the second year is much harder. We do not want to share that with widows in the first year, but we want you to know that, so you continue to provide the care that your widows will need.

- By the second year of caring, we pray you have built a relationship with the widows you are caring for. We also pray she has made connections to others within the church who have shown up and helped.

- If she isn't involved in other areas in the church (i.e. the widows ministry, a Sunday School class, a small group etc.) the second year is a great time to encourage this happens. Remind them that community is important and also that they have a purpose still.

- The second year is also a good time to make sure they have gotten the emotional support they need. This may involve asking them about going to a therapist, a Grief Share group, a widows small group etc. You are not intended to be a therapist or counselor, so you are assessing this based on your opinion, but if you have built a relationship, you will most likely be able to understand what they may need.

- Encourage them to find new hobbies and do new activities if they aren't already. The resource section of the ToolKit has a list of great activity options.

- If they haven't returned to church, keep inviting them to come and to sit next to you.

- Invite them to coffee, lunch or dinner and continue to provide community for them.

- Continue to show up, don't drop off after the 1st year and please make sure they have community and feel loved and seen!

TRAINING - *first year*

This 1st Year ministry is vital to helping widows know they are seen, loved and supported. Before starting the ministry, it is always better to have consistency within this ministry, so if you can commit long-term to this ministry, that will be great.

- You may be part of the 1st Response Team and move into this ministry, so some of this training will be repetitive.

- First of all, show up and keep showing up. We encourage you to text or call once a week and see them in person at least once a month.

- The month-by-month roadmap gives you a lot of great resources to help you know what to do and what to say month to month. This list is not all-inclusive, meaning some things may come up out of order.

- Utilize the additional resources on the main ToolKit page. We have tried to plug in resources after each month that may be helpful, but there is an extensive list for most things that will arise. We have an index there that will help you find these needed resources. If you have a specific question that arises and you can't find a resource for it, please reach out to widows@sitgm.org and we will see what we can find to help you.

- Remember, everyone grieves differently, so what we may have on the timeline may not apply in this exact order to everyone. Allow the widows time and space to grieve and continue to be there.

- When you evaluate how you "think" they are doing remember the following: Everyone's timeline is different. We said how you "think" because you are not a trained therapist, this is only what you think to be true. This could look like....
  - noting that they are isolating and not doing things that make them happy, so you "think" they are not moving forward.

- It is important for you to know that you are not supposed to be a counselor, just a supportive person showing up and loving them. There are great resources for counselors, therapists, Grief Share etc. in the resource section for you to utilize. We also recommend making appropriate communication with the pastor and other ministries in the church that can support the needs that arrive while caring for the widow.

- You are a valuable asset and you are making a difference even when you don't automatically see it, so don't give up.

- Widows can be in shock for months after a loss and sometimes they don't know what they need or even how to carry on normal conversations, just keep showing up and continue trying to discover what the needs are.

- Thank you for being a part of this vital and important ministry! God has called us to do this throughout the Bible and you are making a difference!