

Have you considered.....?

## **PLANNING YOUR CHILD'S SERVICE**

Trauma Intervention Programs of San Diego County, Inc.  
[www.tipsandiego.org](http://www.tipsandiego.org)

Dear Parent,

The child you love has died, as your dreams and hopes come tumbling down around you, please accept our deepest sympathy. As this may be the first memorial or funeral service you have ever planned, we wish to offer you this pamphlet, designed to offer gentle suggestions and a starting point to help you plan your precious child's good bye. While this pamphlet is published by a SIDS organization we feel you will find many of the suggestions appropriate regardless of the age or cause of death of your child.

### GENERAL THOUGHTS~

*Have you considered...*

Taking your time, don't be rushed

Planning a service that meets your needs. Don't be restricted by what others may think

Taking an active part as a couple in the planning of the service

Ways to meet your needs without draining you financially

That if you need financial help, the funeral director should be able to direct you to the proper authorities in county offices, applications usually need to be made before final arrangements are made

Delaying the service until both the mother and father can be present

Having someone stay with the parent when circumstances prevents them from attending the service or conducting a private service in the hospital room

That if one twin has died and the other is expected to die delaying the service to facilitate having the twins buried together

That if you have the service and/or burial in another city you may want to transport the child yourself, you need to ask about the necessary permits

That even if you have said you do not wish to see and or hold your child you can change your mind

A simple private graveside service and a public service at a later date when you have had more time to plan

That if the child's body is to be buried at sea, given for scientific study or cremated, a service is still appropriate

## GENTLE SUGGESTIONS~

*Have you considered...*

Requesting a hand print or foot print

Requesting a lock of hair

Having someone take photos of the floral arrangements

That if an autopsy has been done you may wish to use a bonnet or hat

Finding out if there are visitation hours or limitations as to when you can be with your child prior to the service

Burying the child with family pictures, a favorite toy or in favorite clothing, some families keep a duplicate for themselves

Having photos taken of the child alone or with family members

If your child was stillborn or very small, doll clothes tend to fit better

Building the casket yourself

That your own religion may have specific services designed for children or young people

Letting each sibling select something of the child's to place in the casket

Bathing and dressing your child, combing the child's hair or wrapping your child in a blanket

Holding and rocking your child

Placing half a friendship necklace on the child

Writing a note or letter to your child and including it in the casket

In lieu of flowers: donations to buy books for the child's school, establish a scholarship, donate to organizations

A baptism, you can use your rings to hold tiny drops of water

If you are not pleased with the positioning or appearance of your child ask for changes

## PLANNING THE SERVICE~

*Have you considered...*

That if you do not have a clergy a family member or friend can direct the service

Having the baby placed in a cradle, bassinet or simply held by you during visitation/or service

Lighting a special candle which can then be re-lighted at family functions to include the child's presence

Having literature displayed which explains the cause of death, donation envelopes or suggestions on how friends and family members can be of the most support

How will you have your child called (name, nickname) during the service

Having a picture of the child framed in flowers, a collage of pictures using balloons instead of flowers; placing stuffed animals or special toys around the casket

Having a young child or teenage singer

Asking the pastor to have any children attending come forward and speak directly to their concerns

That even if your child's other siblings wish to attend the service it is a good idea to have someone they feel comfortable with be available in case they choose to or need to leave during the service

Saving a flower from the service and placing it in the baby's book

Designing the memorial folder yourself (picture of child, favorite verse) or ask the funeral director to see his catalog

Video or audio taping your child's service

Services do not have to be at the funeral home; other options are churches, private homes and parks

Holding the casket during services

Transporting the casket to the cemetery in your own vehicle or holding the casket in the family car rather than using the hearse

Carrying your child's casket to the gravesite

Remembering even if you said you did not want to see your child you can change your mind even up to the gravesite

That you don't need to worry if you are running late for the service; they will wait for you

## GRAVESITE~

### *Have you considered...*

Burying your child with another deceased family member; having them share a gravesite can be comforting

That if you decide to cremate your child you may wish to keep the ashes; scatter them, place them in a niche, or bury them in a cemetery or at home, but you need to ask about restrictions

Watching or asking someone to watch for you as the gravesite is closed

Asking if you can participate in the closing of the gravesite

That you don't have to buy a marker right away, but check about any restrictions for the burial site

Designing the headstone yourself (poem, infant's picture, art work), or many stonemasons have examples of headstones

Having a small ceremony to mark the placing of the marker

That if you can't be there to see the gravesite after the stone has been set, to have someone take a photo for you

## IN THE DAYS AND MONTHS THAT FOLLOW~

### *Have you considered...*

Seeking out a peer or professional support group

Using the memorial/service card to announce your child's death to friend who may not have heard of the death

That there isn't any hurry in deciding what to do with the personal belongings of your child

Donating your child's toys to a hospital or church nursery

Asking for a copy of the autopsy report

Putting together a memory box to store pictures, cards

Many religions have anniversary services or masses