



COAAA Professional Education

May 6, 2026

10:00a.m. - 12:00 p.m.



No One Teaches Us: Suicide Loss, Grief, and the Aging Population

Most people think of suicide as a young person's crisis. The data says otherwise. In 2023, adults aged 85 and older had the highest suicide rate of any age group in the United States — and the providers who work with aging populations are already sitting across from the highest risk population in the country, often without knowing it.

This two-hour workshop invites social workers, counselors, and nurses to examine what they know — and don't know — about suicide loss grief in aging adults and their families. Beginning with two foundational distinctions most providers have never been taught (grief and mourning are not synonyms, and we can own our grief), the workshop builds toward practical language and tools for recognizing, naming, and companioning grief that has often gone unaccompanied for years — sometimes decades.

Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of suicide loss as distinct from other bereavement, a framework for working with aging survivors and their families, and language they can bring into the room the very next day.

Presenter:

Karen Austin is a certified thanatologist, intentional grief practitioner, and author who has been a student of grief and mourning her whole life — mostly because life kept insisting.

In her role leading community outreach and serving as Interim Board Chair at LOSS Community Services in Columbus, Ohio, Karen works alongside suicide loss survivors through support groups, community education, and program development. She has been part of LOSS since 2016 — as volunteer, board member, and board chair for four years — and co-facilitates two ten-week support groups each year, which she'll tell you is absolutely her jam.

LOSS exists to make sure no one has to face suicide loss alone, and Karen's work is built around that belief.

Before she turned 25, she had lost all four grandparents and her mother to natural causes, and her brother Butch to suicide. In 2017, she said goodbye to her husband and best friend Tracy after a nine-month beautiful horrid journey through pancreatic cancer.

Karen doesn't approach grief as something to solve. She approaches it as a teacher and a willing student.

What she carries personally informs everything she does professionally — and she'd be the first to tell you she wouldn't have it any other way. She believes grief doesn't need to be fixed — it needs to be witnessed and companioned. We heal when we walk alongside each other.

Objectives:

Upon the completion of this workshop participants will:

- Distinguish between grief and mourning and apply that distinction in clinical practice
- Identify suicide loss grief as distinct from other bereavement and articulate why that distinction matters
- Recognize elevated suicide risk in aging populations and understand the data that supports that recognition
- Identify suicide loss survivors within aging adult caseloads and their family systems, including those who have never named their experience as suicide loss grief
- Apply person-centered language when working with suicide loss survivors across generations
- Utilize practical tools for inviting mourning and companioning grief that has had no public expression
- Identify community resources available to suicide loss survivors, including LOSS Community Services

Continuing Education Units Supervision 3.0 Social Work Clock Hours (#RSX059002) **3.0** Counselor Clock Hours

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FREE

Registration Form

Deadline Apr 29

No One Teaches Us: Suicide Loss, Grief, and the Aging Population

*** please email registration form to training@coaaa.org***

Name: _____

Agency: _____

Address: _____

Special accommodations needed due to disability: _____

Phone (_____) _____

Email: _____

COAAA is happy to offer workshops free of charge

Social Worker

Nurse

Other

(please email registration form to training@coaaa.org)

Questions? Call (614) 645-7250 or 1-800-589-7277. COAAA cannot accept registrations over the phone.

****If no confirmation received within 5 business days, please contact the office****



Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging

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Your Aging and Disability Resource Network