Enhancing Staff Policies and Implementing Inclusive Bereavement at
Ithaca Children's Garden: A Case Study

IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility) Center for Public Gardens
2024-2025 Cohort Project

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Working Group

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Table of Contents

1. Project Summary

For the 2023-2024 IDEA Cohort, Ithaca Children's Garden (ICG) worked on creating a process for improving the organization's employee policies to better support staff and ensure ICG policies reflect the IDEA work the organization promotes externally. Through the process, ICG implemented a new bereavement policy and continues to work on improving the Garden's safety plan. ICG faced several challenges while working on this project, including major organizational leadership changes. Still, ICG is on the path to ensuring the organization is a more desirable and supportive workplace and that it lives up to its values of being inclusive and safe.

2. About Ithaca Children's Garden

Organization Information

Ithaca Children's Garden is a 3-acre public garden located in Ithaca, NY. It is free and open to the public from dawn to dusk every day. ICG has approximately 12 year-round employees and a team of seasonal summer camp staff. ICG was founded in 1997, incorporated as a nonprofit in 1999, and has been in its current location in Cass Park since 2004.

Mission: Connecting children to nature to create a more beautiful, resilient, and just world.

Vision: Every child has the basic human right to play, learn, and grow outdoors, and develops a life-long relationship with the living world.

Values:
1. Child-centered, drawing on the playwork philosophy in our programs.
2. Inclusive & Safe, working to be a multicultural organization that challenges oppression
3. Collaborative, working with local organizations and with other leaders in the fields of education, childcare, gardens, and nature access
4. Innovative, working to continuously learn and improve.
5. Ecologically-centered, practicing and demonstrating ecologically sensitive methods of land-care and people-care and interpreting the benefits of these practices to visitors and program participants

Key Programs and Events:
Paid programs: After School @ ICG, Playful Nature Explorers Preschool, Summer Camp, Field Trips, School's Out Play Days
Free, annual events: The Festival of Fire & Ice, International Mud Day, and Scarecrow Jubilee.

2024 Annual Operating Budget:$623,000

IDEA at ICG

Ithaca Children's Garden had a board-led DEI committee that in recent years has been inactive. Like many of its committees, it included members from the board, staff, and the community. In the absence of that committee and with the departure of the board member who formerly chaired the committee, in late 2022, several staff members came together to form a Staff DEI Working Group (now known as the Staff IDEA Working Group). The group has included numerous staff at various levels including the executive director, development director, education director, communications coordinator, and program administrator. The group meets every two weeks to discuss various IDEA-related topics and was primarily responsible for advancing the IDEA Cohort project. The group is now led by the Outreach and Inclusion Manager.

In April 2024, with changes within the education department, ICG created a new role: Outreach and Inclusion Manager. That role is currently split between education support (substituting, program administration), outreach (engaging with community partners and schools), and IDEA work. The position aims to facilitate IDEA work at ICG, devoting staff time and knowledge to helping the organization further its IDEA goals. This position is part of the leadership team and works directly with the Executive Director in their IDEA work while reporting to the Education Director for their education and outreach roles.

3. Project Selection Process

IDEA work is built into ICG's mission and values, and like many organizations, the organization committed itself to racial justice after the 2020 George Floyd protests. However, as a small organization with numerous recent leadership changes, and growing programs after the COVID-19 pandemic, ICG has many opportunities to expand and improve its IDEA-related work. In particular, one recurring need in recent years is better supporting ICG's staff.

ICG's staff growth has outpaced its benefits and other staff policies. Historically, many of ICG's educators were employed by Cornell Cooperative Extension, accessing that organization's benefits. But as of 2021, all ICG staff are directly employed by Ithaca Children's Garden. ICG first adopted a benefits policy in 2020, which provides Paid Time Off (PTO), health insurance, modest retirement benefits, and other perks. But the organization's benefits and policies still haven't kept pace with the organization's growth. While much work has gone into updating ICG's policies, that work was recently stalled during significant organizational transitions and participation in the Cohort created an important framework to help ICG better prioritize this work. Yet there is still a long way to go! The need to improve policies became a recurring topic at IDEA Working Group meetings.

In 2023, ICG applied to join the second IDEA Center for Public Gardens IDEA Cohort. ICG, at the time in its second year with a new executive director, was more active in pushing forward IDEA initiatives through the Working Group. The educator director and board president

volunteered to join the executive director at IDEA cohort sessions. The IDEA working group worked together to discuss and promote possible projects.

The working group discussed multiple project ideas, including improving outreach to under-served communities, building a food donation program, and improving accessibility at the Garden. However, the group continued to return to the need for improved staff-supporting policies and procedures, such as an improved safety plan and the need for a bereavement policy. Serendipitously, staff at several other public gardens at the time also advocated for improved bereavement policies and helped provide resources to push ICG's work forward.

Through conversations about the Cohort project, IDEA Working Group participants gave updates and solicited feedback during all-staff meetings and Slack. The staff was supportive of all of the potential projects brought forward.

Eventually, the IDEA Working Group settled on the preferred idea of improving ICG's staff-supporting policies broadly. There were too many policies to fill ICG's needs in just a year, so the group decided to create a process that would help the organization systematically evaluate and improve policies while addressing some of the top priorities while developing the system.

The working group formally presented the project proposal to the staff and board, and there was broad support among them. While not all staff members were particularly interested in policy work, everyone seemed to agree that improved policies would benefit everyone.

4. Policy Review Process

ICG is still working through a process for most effectively updating its policies, but this chapter describes the process used during the project and some of the key considerations for each stage. Broadly, the key steps were to 1) track and identify relevant existing or missing policies, 2) analyze policies for priority, 3) work to draft a new or updated policy (identifying organization needs and appropriate resources), 4) adopt the policy, and 5) review the policy regularly.

    1) Tracking and Identifying Policies

ICG tracks its policies through a spreadsheet, though that sheet didn't originally fully reflect the project's needs and it included many purely financial or otherwise non-staff-centered policies. Between lessons from this project and other organizational needs, the spreadsheet was updated in April 2024. The sheet tracks policy status (e.g., adopted, in review, flagged as a priority, etc.), area (e.g., governance, IDEA, finances, site, staff, etc.), and the staff or committee responsible for updating the policy. In the end, the Cohort team didn't focus much on the spreadsheet for this project, but it is a key tool for coordinating among board and staff members to continue the work.

Most of the policies that needed review came from discussions during meetings, particularly the IDEA Working Group. These were primarily related to emerging or recent needs, such as uncertainty about responding to nuisance visitors at the Garden, gaps in staff benefits, and challenges reaching some audiences with existing programs. These conversations were also brought to the broader staff through full team meetings and internal communications platforms like email and Slack.

2) Analyze Policies for Priority

After identifying missing or outdated policies, the IDEA Working Group worked to prioritize policies to review in-depth and attempt to introduce or update. The team had many considerations:

- What is the policy status? Adopted but outdated? Drafted? Missing?
- How relevant and urgent is the policy? Is it a common concern? Does it have a major impact on staff? Are there legal ramifications around the policy?
- What impact might updating the policy have? Benefits? Costs?
- How challenging is the policy to update? Would it require expertise from outside of the organization? Are there comparable policies or best practices to draw from? Who needs to be involved in the process?

After creating their own list of potential priorities, the IDEA Working Group brought the conversation to all-staff meetings and created a poll for staff to identify places they could use more support anonymously and asked about any policies they think need to be considered for introduction or revision. Through these methods, the team identified the following priorities:

A. Training and professional development (including IDEA)
B. Physical and mental health support for staff
C. Adequate staffing numbers
D. Bereavement
E. Safety Plan
F. IDEA-related policies
G. Childcare support and program access
H. Caring for ICG's physical spaces

The poll also revealed some staff concerns about a lack of clarity in some policies and urged caution about policy exceptions. In the latter case, the concern was primarily with policies that allow the executive director to overrule a policy. In ICG's case, staff and leadership agreed that exceptions like that should be limited and primarily used to provide additional support rather than less.

Using the input, the IDEA Working Group determined which policies to work on first, settling on bereavement and the safety plan, ensuring the full staff broadly agreed with the choices. See later chapters for more details about each policy.

3) Work to Draft a New or Updated Policy

In most cases, this was the most complicated part of the process and involved many smaller steps. These steps may not apply to all policies and may come in a different order (e.g., the team had resources for updating bereavement before identifying a lead):

1. Identify a lead person or team for working on the policy
2. Find resources for updating the policy, such as policies from other organizations
3. Discuss needs and priorities as a smaller group
4. Solicit input from broader staff
5. Draft policy
6. Draft a supporting policy rationale document to assist in communicating with stakeholders the process & rationale for arriving at certain decisions included in policy
7. Review the draft and discuss
8. Update policy based on feedback
9. Seek input from the policy committee, board, etc., as needed
10. Make any needed changes

One key difference the organization is exploring in the future is more regularly convening its policy committee to help streamline the process and bring in additional experts to help with updating policies.

4) Adopt and Implement the Policy

For ICG, official policy adoption requires a board vote. *(Some protocols that are more procedural in nature may not require a formal vote but rather rely on input of staff who are most closely involved with implementing the procedure.)*

5) Review the Policy

Ideally, the organization will review its policies annually, every other year, or on another defined cadence to ensure they continue to meet evolving organizational needs and goals.

5. Bereavement Policy

See the appendix for Ithaca Children's Garden's adopted bereavement policy, stand-alone introduction to the policy, and rationale for various pieces of the policy.

Background

Ithaca Children's Garden previously did not have a bereavement policy or any provisions for paid time specific to staff losing a loved one. ICG's general paid time off policy starts with 2 weeks off and goes up to 4 weeks off for employees starting in their 5th year of employment. It also follows the minimum of New York State's sick time policy, which gives a maximum of 40 hours of paid sick time (for employers with 5-99 employees) accumulated at one hour per 30 worked hours.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County employees would have had fairly standard provisions for bereavement (known as "funeral leave") of up to three consecutive paid days off for the loss of an immediate family member and one workday for an extended family member. Any additional time off required could come from other accumulated PTO or unpaid leave.

In the summer of 2022, an ICG staff member lost their mother, and the ICG board voted to approve 4 paid days off for that staff member. The time off was approved ten days after the employee lost their mother. The staff member ended up needing at least two weeks off, with some of that time unpaid due to a lack of accumulated PTO, between grieving and travel for services.

The bereavement policy process helped inform the Policy Review Process.

Bereavement Policy Adoption Process

1. Project Lead

The then-Program Administrator (now Outreach and Inclusion Manager) took the lead on the policy, playing a major role in searching for resources to inform the policy, leading the discussions, drafting the policy, seeking and incorporating input, fielding questions about the policy and its development, keeping it in front of stakeholders for active consideration, and ultimately presenting it to the board for a vote.

2. Resources

The lead found multiple examples of bereavement policies from a variety of other organizations. Two of the reference policies were in line with the Cornell Cooperative Extension example above, offering up to three paid days off if an employee loses a close family member. Three reference policies provided by other public garden staff provided much more generous amounts of time off and were otherwise more inclusive. ICG drew heavily from those policies. Because they are not publicly listed, their sources won't be listed here, but they broadly had the following terms:
   A. Leave amount: One policy provides 10 days off for a close family member and 3 for close friends and extended family. One provides 10-15 days off in the event of the loss of family or a loved one and makes a point of not defining family or a loved one. The final policy provides 5 days off for any loved one and up to 5 additional days with approval.
   B. Two policies provided one day off for the loss of a pet, while the third provided 10 days.
   C. Two policies specified that the days don't need to be taken off consecutively, and the third was unclear about when the leave could be taken.
   D. Two of the policies included the loss of pregnancy in qualifying for bereavement leave.

3. Identify Needs and Priorities

The working group discussed the key aspects they wanted to include in a bereavement policy for ICG, heavily drawing from the three reference policies most closely aligned with ICG's goals of inclusive care for staff. The group generally agreed on the following points:

A. Five days was the bare minimum amount of time to provide, with people free to take less time if needed, but they also wanted to provide up to ten days for people who needed it.
B. They wanted to include time off for pets and loss of pregnancy.
C. They didn't want to define a "loved one"—families can look different and they felt it was not their business to define who does or doesn't count as a "close family member" or something similar.
D. They considered the possibility of someone abusing the policy but concluded if someone were to abuse the bereavement policy, there would almost certainly be other concerns, and that it should not be the burden of this policy to police that.
E. Bereavement leave should not be required to be taken immediately or consecutively, acknowledging that grieving and services can vary in timing and duration. They also decided to include the first anniversary in the timeframe in case that is a challenging day for the staff member facing loss

The team also had some questions:
A. How might the policy interact with other time off policies, such as NYS Paid Family Leave?
B. What should the approval process look like?
C. How can the organization support employees dealing with loss beyond providing paid time off?
D. How can they balance making the policy concise and clear while addressing common questions?

4. Full employee input

The IDEA Working Group provided updates to the full staff and opportunities for people to provide input or get involved in the process if they had thoughts.

5. Drafting

The policy lead drafted it, drawing on the language and formatting of other ICG policies, the reference policies, and the discussions from previous meetings.

6. Review and Discussion

Staff, particularly the IDEA Working Group, provided feedback and asked questions. There was some pushback from an outgoing leadership staff member who had not been involved in initial feedback (wishing to exclude pets and for the Executive Director to approve time off). While the working group staff made a few minor changes, this mostly prompted the staff to share justification for the policy's provisions.

7. Updating the Policy

The policy lead reviewed and incorporated feedback provided and tightened up the language to make the policy clearer and more concise, rewriting many points while keeping all provisions true to intent

8. Soliciting board input

The policy and justification document was shared with a policy expert on the board, who expressed some concerns about clarity around NYS Paid Family Leave and HIPAA compliance concerns around requiring any staff member to disclose information about attempts at becoming pregnant, pregnancy loss, or attempting to have children.

9. Updates

The lead removed the NYS Paid Family Leave reference, as the overlap was determined to be situational and could confuse the policy if left in.

The lead also added a line about not requiring staff to disclose the nature of their loss, in part to protect those with loss of pregnancy from needing to disclose if they don't wish.

After making those changes, the Executive Director shared the policy and justification with full board leadership (copying the lead in the email), seeking any further input. The board leaders appreciated how well thought out the policy was and had no critiques. The documents were then shared with the full board.

One board member asked whether or not there was an annual cap on accessing the leave on losing a distant family member (a question that also came up at the board meeting). The lead and the executive director clarified that there was not because the policy doesn't define how close a "loved one" must be for time off and because capping the benefit would be counter to the intent of the policy - which is to support team members during what can be the most difficult times in someone's life - should a staff member lose multiple loved ones in a year.

Policy Status

The policy went to a board vote on Monday, May 20th, and passed unanimously. Board members and meeting guests shared their appreciation for the thoughtfulness and inclusiveness of the policy.

6. Safety Plan

Background

Ithaca Children's Garden has created various formal and informal policies for dealing with safety concerns, including an in-depth plan for ICG's summer camp. However, there were issues with some details becoming dated (e.g., instructing staff to contact the former executive director), relying too heavily on calling the police for non-emergency situations, and uncertainty on how to deal with threats to emotional or psychological safety. For example, there was a visitor who would complain to staff about trans inclusion, COVID regulations (even long past mandatory masking), and other conspiracy theories. This visitor generally didn't present a physical threat to staff, program participants, or visitors, but made staff uncomfortable.

These concerns led to numerous conversations about improving ICG's safety plan, particularly during the school year when fewer staff members are present at the Garden.

Process

Because this was the second policy/procedure addressed by the team, the process for implementing the bereavement policy helped inform the process for the safety plan. There were some differences, however. ICG already had many pieces of a safety plan, and given time constraints has not finalized an updated plan as of the writing of this case study.

1. Project Lead

The Education Director has taken the lead on this policy, as the supervisor of most on-site staff and as the Camp Director responsible for the summer camp safety plan.

2. Find resources for updating the policy, such as policies from other organizations

The policy lead used existing internal policies, including the camp safety plan (which must be updated every year and submitted to the NYS Health Department) and other recent work on safety procedures. The organization has identified a need for referencing other organizations' policies as examples of how to address visitors that threaten staff or visitor emotional safety.

3. Discuss needs and priorities as a smaller group

As mentioned above, staff and visitor psychological and emotional safety have emerged as key priorities that the IDEA Working Group wants to address. Other priorities include ensuring the safety plan procedures and clear and well-communicated to staff, the question of whether or not the organization should list expectations on a sign at the Garden, and finding alternatives to police to reach out to when someone at the Garden is in need and is not an immediate safety concern.

4. Solicit input from broader staff

Bringing the conversation to full staff meetings, the team settled on maintaining minimal signage at the Garden. Otherwise, the team is still working to discuss (in both small- and large-group conversations) the safety plan and to address concerns.

5. Draft policy

The project lead drafted a policy, drawing heavily on the existing resources at ICG, and solicited feedback from the DEI working group. The organization is still working to improve the draft policy.

Status

ICG has clarified pieces of the safety plan related to physical safety (e.g. how to respond to threats, missing children, etc.), and is still working on formalizing how to respond to emotional and psychological safety concerns. One key goal is to empower on-the-ground staff to better respond to such concerns and to have a plan for if they are unable or unwilling to engage with a visitor who is not upholding ICG's values or respecting staff or visitors.

7. Lessons and Conclusion

Challenges

ICG faced a variety of challenges in carrying out this project. For several months the organization was without an operations manager, who carries out most of the organization's HR work. Half-way through the project the executive director and education director announced that they would be leaving the organization for unrelated reasons. These were also the two staff attendees of the cohort sessions. The board member was also not active in the cohort sessions or other planning meetings because of work obligations.

Another major challenge facing this work is the difficulty in finding other organizations' policies. Most organizations don't publicly list their detailed benefits or other employee policies. Ithaca Children's Garden hopes to help other organizations by sharing their bereavement policy here. ICG also publicly shares staff benefits on their website.

Strengths

Our staff at all levels was supportive of and involved in these efforts, including leadership being involved in discussions and feedback.

Our board was supportive, even if they were relatively hands-off. We have a board member knowledgeable in policy who provided valuable input for the bereavement policy.

A staff member with a strong interest in IDEA work took and maintained the lead in the project (including writing this case study), though they weren't originally attending cohort sessions. Thus, when the original cohort attendees left the organization, the project was able to continue without major interruption (though it certainly slowed significantly). That staff member became the organization's first Outreach and Inclusion Manager in April 2024, formalizing their role in prioritizing IDEA at ICG and ensuring time is devoted to IDEA work (aiming for about 12 hours per week on average).

Lessons Learned

Working through this project highlighted several key lessons for effectively updating staff policies to support staff.

First, as with most projects, this work requires a dedicated commitment of time and effort, otherwise it stagnates. Because most of the policies are not essential to keeping the organization running, there is a risk of letting them slide until they next come up (which, particularly in the case of bereavement, is too late).

However, it's not enough to devote time–policy requires support and expertise to effectively implement. Being able to access other organizations' policies, referencing best practices, and having policy experts greatly facilitates the work and reduces barriers later in the process (such as when the board votes on the policy).

Finally, the organization had to strike a balance between being methodical and pushing forward when things were unclear. Having and developing a method for updating policies was very helpful in making progress, but if the IDEA Working Group paused trying to update during a major leadership transition then the team would still be waiting to implement a bereavement policy and would be much less prepared to take on future policy improvements.

Conclusion

In the end, Ithaca Children's Garden made great strides to better support its staff through improved policies and procedures despite changes and challenges within the organization. It has a new, inclusive bereavement policy so that staff are better supported when they lose a loved one. The team is actively working on improving its plan for addressing the rare times that visitors make the garden feel less welcome, and to ensure that staff feel confident in addressing safety concerns. Finally, ICG has developed a process for continuing to improve its policies in order to better support staff and to better live up to its values.

ICG hopes other organizations find this case study and the attached bereavement policy helpful as they work to improve their own IDEA efforts.

A. ICG Bereavement Policy Context

Prepared by Trey Ramsey on the 10th of April 2024 and edited for this Case Study. Note this document was created before ICG adopted the bereavement policy located on the next page. This document was given to ICG's board to help introduce the proposed policy and emphasize its importance.

As part of our IDEA Center for Public Gardens cohort project, we are focusing on implementing a process to improve our employee-supporting policies (such as benefits). We identified many priority policies, and bereavement leave was deemed one of the highest achievable priorities. ICG does not currently have a bereavement policy, with employees not guaranteed time off if they lose a loved one and needing to take other paid or unpaid time off during any time away.

Two years ago, a staff member lost their mother and the board had to vote to approve paid time away. For ICG to best support its employees, we need a robust bereavement leave policy. In developing the proposed policy, we identified other organizations' policies, discussed the needs and priorities in the IDEA working group, and asked for input from the rest of the ICG staff. After several rounds of revisions, we developed the provided bereavement policy.

We recognize that the bereavement policy proposal goes well beyond what many businesses and organizations provide, for those that provide bereavement leave at all. However, we determined that "standard" bereavement leave of a maximum of three days is quite insufficient for when someone loses a close loved one, and the policy we developed of 5-10 paid days off is in line with the more inclusive policies that we referenced from [three other nonprofit organizations] (each provides a maximum of 10 days off for close family members). Should ICG continue not to provide bereavement leave, employees who need the time will take it regardless, and it is in the organization's best interest to support the employee through that loss. In 2022 when the ICG staff member lost their mother, they ended up taking about 10 days off total (plus working some partial days), between grieving and memorial/family arrangements. Four of those days were paid bereavement leave, several of them were separate PTO, and several of them ended up being unpaid.

As one further consideration, ICG provides the NY-mandated 40 hours (max) of sick leave each year, meaning one week for an employee who works 40 hours per week. It is common for employers to provide two weeks of sick time per year, on top of vacation/PTO. This lack of sick time for ICG further reduces staff's ability to take paid time off for bereavement.

Please also see Rationale for ICG Bereavement Policy for further justification of specific details within the proposed policy.

B. Ithaca Children's Garden Bereavement Policy

Adopted 5/20/24

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to support employees when they lose a loved one.

Definitions:

Bereavement leave is time away from work given after the loss of a human loved one, pregnancy, or pet in order to grieve, attend/arrange services, and address other concerns related to the loss. ICG does not and cannot define what a "loved one" means to the employee.

Eligibility:

This policy is applicable to all employees who work at least nine months per year, regardless of how many hours are normally worked per week. This benefit is available immediately upon an eligible employee's hire.

Provisions:

- ICG will provide eligible employees up to ten (10) days of paid bereavement leave in the event of the loss of a human loved one or loss of the employee's or a partner's pregnancy. The first five (5) days require an employee notifying their supervisor. The following five (5) require a discussion with and approval from the supervisor before the days are taken. This time is separate from accumulated PTO.
- The days off do not need to be taken consecutively and may be used up to one year and one day after the passing of a loved one. The employee is encouraged to take the amount of time they need when they need it, within the terms of this policy.
- One (1) day of paid bereavement leave is provided in the event of the loss of a pet. This time may be taken before a pet's death for end-of-life arrangements.
- ICG will maintain and provide a list of resources to help employees through loss and grief, which may include support groups, mental health services, and more.
- If the employee requires more time off related to the loss of a loved one, they should discuss additional options with their supervisor. The employee may be able to use PTO or unpaid time off if necessary. At this point, the supervisor may ask for a plan for returning to work for the time off to be granted.

Process:

- The employee should immediately inform their supervisor of the loss and their need to take up to 5 days off.
- At any point within a year and one day of the loss, the employee may take any remaining time off from the first 5 days of bereavement leave by notifying their supervisor. They should inform their supervisor as soon as possible, but ICG recognizes that grief is not always predictable.
- After taking an initial 5 days off, the employee may request up to 5 additional days of paid bereavement leave within a year and a day from the loss as soon as they recognize

the need for time off. This may require a further conversation to ensure the employee has the support they need. The supervisor will do their best to accommodate the request and may check with the executive director in the event of complications or questions.

- Employees do not need to provide any documentation of their loss to access the days off provided by this benefit.
- Employees facing loss are not required to disclose the nature of the loss, including in cases of the loss of pregnancy
- Example scenario:
  - An employee informs their supervisor of the loss of a loved one and their need to take time off. They immediately take 3 business days off to grieve and arrange funeral services.
  - The employee returns and works 2 days. They check in with their supervisor and inform their supervisor that they need to travel out of state for funeral arrangements the following weekend for 3 additional business days. Because that exceeds the initial 5 days of bereavement leave, the supervisor approves the 6th day.
  - A year after the death of their loved one, the employee needs to take another day off to grieve. They request the time from their supervisor that morning, who approves that day off.
  - In total, the employee took 7 days of paid bereavement leave over the course of a year, with the first 5 requiring informing their supervisor and the following 2 requiring approval from their supervisor.

C. Rationale for ICG Bereavement Policy

This document was provided to ICG's board to help explain and justify aspects of the policy that differ from common, less generous or inclusive policies. The rationale text is indented, and the policy text is not. See the previous two pages for the full policy.

Definitions:

Bereavement leave is time away from work given after the loss of a human loved one, pregnancy, or pet in order to grieve, attend/arrange services, and address other concerns related to the loss. ICG does not and cannot define what a "loved one" means to the employee.

> **We decided not to limit the policy to "close family" or get into details of close vs. distant family vs friends because different families can look different ways, and we want to include all kinds of families (including chosen)**. We want to trust employees to be truthful about their relationship with someone and their need to grieve. If an employee abuses this policy, we figured that there would be other issues with their performance that would warrant addressing without needing to worry too much within this policy.

Provisions:

- ICG will provide eligible employees up to ten (10) days of paid bereavement leave in the event of the loss of a human loved one or loss of the employee's or a partner's pregnancy. The first five (5) days require an employee notifying their supervisor. The following five (5) require a discussion with and approval from the supervisor before the days are taken. This time is separate from accumulated PTO.

  > Many policies provide 3 days for bereavement, and sometimes that is specifically for funeral travel. We found that to be wholly inadequate for most people who lose a close loved one. The example policies we used for reference provided 10-15 days for close family members, and we didn't want to go lower than that. We did want a check in place for days 6-10, in part to make sure people get the support they need and in the event that we have staffing issues that require working with someone to address.
  > We decided not to impose a limit on the number of times in a year that an employee can use this benefit, regardless of the type of relationship with the loved one. If an employee loses multiple loved ones in a year, they should be able to grieve without being told "sorry, you already used your bereavement leave." Also, see under "definitions" for why we don't have different policies for different kinds of relationships.

- The days off do not need to be taken consecutively and may be used up to one year and one day after the passing of a loved one. The employee is encouraged to take the amount of time they need when they need it, within the terms of this policy.

  > This was important to include because grief is not always predictable and because services may not be immediate. Allowing for one year and one day allows for someone to have the first anniversary of their loved one's passing included, if needed.

- One (1) day of paid bereavement leave is provided in the event of the loss of a pet. This time may be taken before a pet's death for end-of-life arrangements.
  - This was common to the example policies (though the listed EEC policy provides 10 days) and most staff who reviewed and discussed it agreed that it was important to include in this policy.
- ICG will maintain and provide a list of resources to help employees through loss and grief, which may include support groups, mental health services, and more.

Process:
- Employees facing loss are not required to disclose the nature of the loss, including in cases of the loss of pregnancy
  - This would ensure that ICG doesn't require employees to disclose pregnancy or that they are seeking children, respecting their privacy and reducing the possibility of ICG violating HIPAA or anti discrimination laws.