



**The
Compassionate
Friends**
Supporting Family After a Child Dies

Organization

- All Chapter Leaders are volunteers and are bereaved parents, siblings or grandparents, as are the 55 Regional Coordinators, who serve as liaisons with the chapters and the national office.
- There is a 13-member national volunteer board of directors consisting of bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents.
- The Compassionate Friends National Office is located in Oak Brook, Illinois. The Executive Director works in partnership, and is supported by five full-time and one part-time staff members.

THE NATIONAL OFFICE

TCF WEBSITE

www.compassionatefriends.org

STREET ADDRESS 1000 Jorie Boulevard, Suite 140 Oak Brook, IL 60523

PHONE NUMBERS (630) 990-0010 and toll free 877-969-0010

FACEBOOK <https://www.facebook.com/>

TCFUSA MAILING ADDRESS P.O. Box 3696 Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

FAX NUMBER (630) 990-0246

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NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF

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BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

In 1968 Assistant Chaplain Simon Stephens was working at Coventry & Warwickshire Hospital in Coventry, England. While on duty, Joe and Iris Lawley's 11-year-old son, Kenneth, died at the hospital after being struck by a car. Another young boy, Billy Henderson, was dying from terminal cancer in the same hospital. Chaplain Stephens brought the two sets of parents together to talk and together they were able to provide support and hope to one another. In January 1969 six people, including Simon met and from that meeting was born The Society of The Compassionate Friends.

On October 8, 1970, a car-train accident caused the death of 10-year-old Gabrielle Shamres. Her parents, Arnold and Paula Shamres, suffered through overwhelming grief, guilt and anger, without guidance. Then, in 1971 the Shamres read an article in TIME Magazine about the British Society of The Compassionate Friends, and wrote Simon Stephens. In 1972 the Shamres started the first US chapter of The Compassionate Friends and from 1972 to 1977 approximately 40 branches of TCF were developed under the leadership of the Shamres.

In 1978 the first organizing conference was held. At that Conference, National by-laws were adopted, a Board of Directors was formed and national officers were elected. The organization was also incorporated into the State of Illinois as The Compassionate Friends, Inc. In February, 1979 Arnold Shamres died followed four years later by the death of his wife, Paula.

In the spring of 1980 Art and Ronnie Peterson were named national coordinators and travelled the country spreading the news about TCF. The Peterson's have been credited with TCF's survival. The organization then grew from 126 chapters in 1979 to 460 chapters in 1985. The first sibling representative was appointed to the national board in 1989. In 1996 TCF split in two and the Bereaved Parents of the United States was formed (BPUSA). In 2002 the TCF Foundation was established to provide financial stability to the organization that had nearly 600 chapters.

As of 2016 there are nearly 700 chapters, with locations in all 50 states, Washington DC, Guam and Puerto Rico.

TCF Foundation

The mission of TCF Foundation is to build endowed funds to ensure that The Compassionate Friends will always be available for families following the death of a child.

Year after year for nearly four decades, The Compassionate Friends has spread hope to more and more bereaved families. TCF has been widely recognized as a unique lifeline for those who are dealing with the tremendous grief that follows the death of a child. The organization has built this reputation in spite of struggling with the financial ups and downs that plague nearly all nonprofits.

From these financial struggles emerged the idea that a foundation might be created with the sole purpose of guaranteeing enough financial stability for The Compassionate Friends to always "be there" to provide emotional support to those who may see no hope. In 2000, thanks to the dedication and commitment of many members and friends of TCF, that dream came true with the creation of TCF Foundation.

While TCF Foundation has come a long way since its inception, there is still a long way to go before its mission can truly be reached. As a member of TCF or simply as a caring individual, you can support TCF Foundation through donations that can take many different forms.