CBEM
CHILDHOOD BEREAVEMENT ESTIMATION MODEL

ILLINOIS REPORT 2026

Childhood bereavement is a critical issue and an increasingly important national priority.

The Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model® (CBEM)[1] approximates rates of bereavement for U.S. youth. Results from the CBEM are updated annually using vital statistics[2] from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).* The 2026 report reflects 2020 to 2024 data, the five most recent years available.

1 in 12 children



in Illinois will experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18.

BY AGE 18

8.5% or ~232K

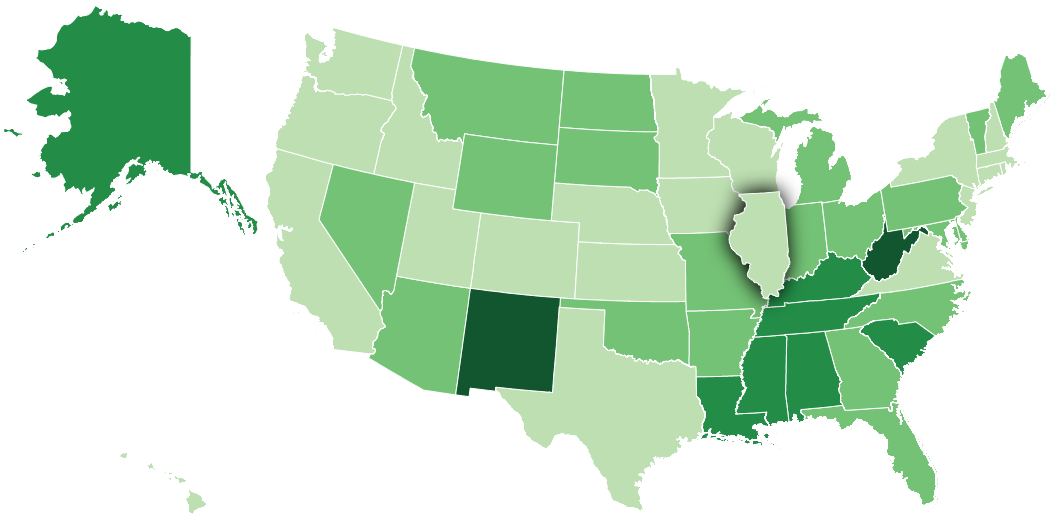
children **will be** bereaved;
LOWER than the national average of 9.1%.

BY AGE 25

~571K

youth **will be** bereaved.
The number **more than doubles**.

Childhood Bereavement Rates by State†



CBEM Ranking by State†

33rd

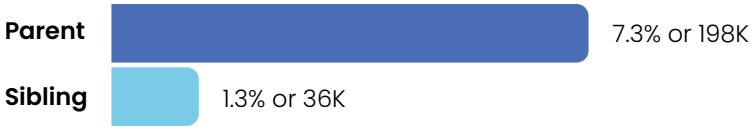
KEY

6.8% - 8.7%
8.8% - 10.7%
10.8% - 12.7%
12.8% - 14.7%

†Bereavement due to parent or sibling death by age 18.

Relationship to the Deceased

CBEM Projected results provide independent estimates of the percentage and number of youth ages 0-17 who will experience the death of a parent or sibling.



©2026 Judi's House/JAG Institute

CBEM Leading Cause of Death

The CBEM can produce bereavement estimates by cause of death. The tables below reflect the percentages of all bereaved children who will experience bereavement due to the leading causes of death for youth and adults, respectively.

Death of a Sibling (Ages 0 - 17)

Cause of Death	Percentage of Bereaved Children
Conditions related to birth	32.7%
Accidents	13.6%
Birth defects	13.0%
Homicide	8.4%
Cancer	3.8%

Death of a Parent (Ages 28 - 47)

Cause of Death	Percentage of Bereaved Children
Accidents	30.0%
Heart disease	11.6%
Cancer	11.1%
Homicide	8.0%
Suicide	7.3%

Cost of Inaction

Over the past two decades, CBEM data show increasing rates of bereavement nationally. Trends in Illinois are consistent with these patterns, with the most pronounced increases observed among young adult populations. Young adulthood is a time of heightened vulnerability because of independence and changes in support systems,[3] making it a critical period for providing structure and resources. These include bereavement support, healthcare continuity, and connections to caring communities. Additionally, financial stability is vital at this age. Social Security benefits are available for bereaved children, and can provide support into young adulthood.

CBEM Projected percentage and number of youth bereaved due to death of a parent or sibling

United States	Age	1999 - 2003‡		2020 - 2024‡	
Illinois	By age 18	7.1%	231K	8.5%	232K
	By age 25	12.8%	573K	14.7%	571K
United States	By age 18	7.0%	5.0M	9.1%	6.6M
	By age 25	12.6%	12.6M	15.4%	15.9M

‡These CBEM Projected results indicate children projected to be bereaved in 2003 and 2024 using five years of data to account for suppression and variability.

Call to Action

CBEM Projected results underscore the urgency of addressing childhood bereavement as a public health priority. Reducing barriers to care requires coordinated efforts across systems to ensure that grieving children, young adults, and families can access the support, stability, and services they need. Recommended actions include:

Awareness & Identification

Systematically monitor trends and universally identify bereaved children through coordinated efforts in schools, healthcare, and other service settings.

Policy

Advance policies and funding that strengthen programs and services for bereaved children and families.

Training & Education

Expand grief and trauma training for faith leaders, mentors, school staff, employers, and other community figures.

Programming

Develop and evaluate effective programming that meets the needs of diverse populations.

For additional national, state, and local CBEM data, visit: **cbem.judishouse.org**

judi's house JAG Institute
For Grieving Children and Families

Judi's House/JAG Institute is a research-based nonprofit organization in Aurora, Colorado devoted solely to supporting grieving children and their families. Our vision is that no child should be alone in grief.

NEW YORK LIFE Foundation

Judi's House/JAG Institute partnered with the New York Life Foundation to help support grieving children and families by creating the Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model (CBEM).

For sources and additional information on the CBEM, visit judishouse.org/cbem.

©2026 Judi's House/JAG Institute