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**DISTANCE-TECHNOLOGY DELIVERED GRIEF SUPPORT PROGRAM-
PERCEIVED QUALITY AND SATISFACTION OF TRAINING PROVIDED TO
SOCIAL WORKERS**

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Abstract: Death of a close family member or friend can be overwhelming for an individual. The loss of someone initiates the natural response of grief. Grief covers a wide variety of challenging emotions and thoughts; and guidance in a form of grief support in how to cope with these can be very helpful. Grief support can be found through individual counseling, grief support groups, reading materials, hospice organizations, other local organizations, websites, etc. However, not everyone has access to grief support. Those who live beyond cities or towns have very limited access to grief support. Caring Connections: A Hope and Comfort in Grief Program, a non-profit organization located in the College of Nursing at the University of Utah, has been awarded a research grant to extend grief support groups to rural/frontier Utah via distance-technology. The mission of Caring Connections is to provide excellent evidence-based bereavement care to grieving persons in the intermountain west through clinician facilitated support groups; and, in keeping with the academic mission of the University and the College of Nursing, to provide opportunity for clinical education in grief and loss to students in the health care professions, and to conduct research which promotes greater understanding of loss, grief and bereavement. Caring Connections offers a range of grief groups relating to a variety of losses and serves over 400 individuals each year. Through this grant, Caring Connections grief support program will increase accessibility to bereavement care, demonstrate innovative ways to extend bereavement care in outpatient and community settings, and reduce the health care gap in underserved communities. Utah currently has 93 licensed hospice agencies and only eight of them serve the rural-frontier Utah. Hospice professionals in the eight agencies are faced with the challenges of driving long distances to reach their patients to provide care. This program will also decrease the challenges of time and travel for hospice professionals and the bereaved population in this area for grief support. My role in this research project is to: (1) Collaborate with Dr. Supiano and the research team in developing study and social work participant relevant satisfaction questions and quality improvement questions regarding the training of social workers in grief support group skills, (2) Collaborate in developing the interviewing method for obtaining data (telephone vs. telehealth platform), (3) Conduct quality assurance and participant satisfaction interviews with social work facilitators prior and immediately after training, and upon completion of an eight- week grief support group. (4) Assist with evaluating facilitator protocol adherence data. (5) Assist with data entry and evaluation. Through this we will be able to evaluate quality of support provided to the bereavement population in rural/frontier Utah via distance technology and diminish healthcare discrepancies.