

Bringing people together to grieve can be a powerful tool, providing support and camaraderie during a difficult time in your life. GVSU will respond with concern, care, and respect for the student and their family and friends. The goal is to be present for you, support you, and ensure you are aware of services available to you.

Hosting a Vigil

Are you interested in hosting a vigil to honor your friend? The [Event Services](#) team is available to support you and offer guidance as you plan. Contact us in person by visiting 1110 Kirkhof Center, via email at events@gvsu.edu, or by phone at 616-331-2350.

Considerations

First and foremost, does the family of the deceased support a vigil? Would they like to be present? It's important to remember that everyone grieves differently. Some families may ask that you pause or not host a vigil at all. Be respectful of their wishes.

Consider the friend you are grieving. How would they like to be remembered? A small, intimate gathering of close friends honoring the memory of a friend can provide much needed support.

Focus. Are you doing this event to honor your friend's memory? To support their circle of friends? Process together with community? Clarifying your focus will help us help you.

Are there religious or identity considerations to think about? Consider the student you are honoring. Would they want representation from their synagogue, mosque, church, or temple? Is their identity recognized by family and friends?

The Dean of Students Office liaisons with the family on behalf of the University. Connect with the Dean of Students Office prior to planning to clarify these nuances.

Who will attend?

Who is the target audience? Family? Friends? Community? Be considerate of how a vigil may affect those attending.

Scale

After considering the family's wishes, how many people do you expect to participate? Will this be a private or public event?

Location

What location would best suit your needs while respecting the wishes of the family? The Cook-DeWitt Center, Cook-DeWitt Plaza, and the Kirkhof Center among others, are locations to consider. Event Services will help reserve an appropriate location to meet your needs.

GVSU has additional support options available:

- Concerned about a friend? Filing a CARE report will initiate contact by a CARE team member with the person about whom you have concern. To file a report, click [here](#).
- Talking through a loss can be a powerful tool in the healing process. The University Counseling Center is a helpful resource. Find their services [here](#).
- Other GVSU communities offering support to the campus community: [Kaufman Interfaith Institute](#), [LGBTQ Resource Center](#), [Office of Multicultural Affairs](#), [Women's Center](#)