

HOW TO WRITE AN OBITUARY FOR YOUR TEENAGER.

YOU sit and watch your child sleep. The hospital intercom serves as a constant reminder of where you are. You tuck in the blanket around his feet. He hasn't moved since you last tucked it in, but it gives you something to do. It's been two days since your child's friends carried him into the emergency room. The doctor says it's a losing battle. You're not ready for that.

* LISTING THE cause of death in the obituary is at the family's discretion.

When the hospital called, you thought it was a minor cut, another broken collarbone. The hospital nurse mentioned inhalants. That was a mistake, you thought. But you soon learned "sniffing" — inhaling household products to get high — was not a mistake. It was a habit. A habit that could've started with over 100 ordinary, everyday products like gasoline, correction fluid and spray paint. A habit that makes paraphernalia out of socks, soda cans, lunch bags. A habit that can damage the brain, heart,

kidneys, liver. A habit that can even kill the very first time. You stare at your child and wonder if maybe that wouldn't have been better.

* IT IS APPROPRIATE to include the child's nickname if well-known.

It's been 16 hours since your child was pronounced dead. The relatives you phoned didn't know about inhalants. It seems no one did. You haven't slept in two days, but somehow you keep going. Because you have a funeral to arrange. And people to console. And someone from the obituary section is on the phone. They need to know about the child you just lost.

* FAMILIES WILL often prefer to have the funeral home handle the obituary.

Could this be your child? We hope not. For more information about sniffing, please call 1-800-729-6686. There are signs to look for. You just need to know what they are.

