

COVID-19 Funeral and Mortuary Science Guidance

CURRENT AS OF MARCH 19, 2020

Infection Control for the Funeral Home

- Standard infection control practices should be used for someone who had died from COVID-19.
- Use of standard personal protective equipment (PPE) including the use of facial protection to protect eyes, nose, and mouth should be worn by the mortician when preparing the body or embalming, especially if splashing of fluids is expected.
- If shrouding, directly handling or washing the body are important religious or cultural practices, families are encouraged to work with their community cultural and religious leaders and funeral home staff on how to reduce their exposure as much as possible. Families should be encouraged to wear personal protective equipment if possible (such as disposable gown, face shield or goggles and facemask). Especially important would be for them to wear facial protection and perform hand hygiene when they are done.
- Follow routine cleaning and disinfection procedures using an EPA-registered, hospital-grade disinfectant to clean the mortuary work area.

Funeral Guidance

- Decedents can be buried or cremated following current state requirements.
- It is possible to have a funeral but it should be limited to 50 and the venue must be able to accommodate social distancing of 6 feet per person.
- Services with more than 10 people where the majority of participants are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be postponed or cancelled.
- Funeral homes should discourage families from providing food or beverages.
- A suggestion to the families could be to postpone the funeral until the restrictions on numbers of attendees are lifted; this might be for several months or longer.
- Funeral directors could offer livestreaming as an option for these services/viewings.
- There is currently no known risk associated with being in the same room at a funeral or visitation service with the body of someone who has died of COVID-19. People should consider not touching or kissing the body of someone who has died of COVID-19, so this can be a recommendation to the funeral attendees.
- People who feel sick or who are part of an at-risk population (e.g., the elderly, immune-compromised, etc.) should stay home per MDH recommendations.
- Funeral homes should encourage families to practice social distancing at the service, wash their hands, and cover their coughs.
- Encourage families to scale back direct contact like handshakes, hugging, and kissing at the service or funeral.
- Funeral homes should supply tissues and alcohol-based hand rubs for the families to use.
- Funeral homes should stock adequate supply of soap and paper towels in the rest rooms.

Ultimately, funeral homes will have to determine how they will best balance the guidance with the needs of their families. Each funeral home should develop a plan to manage challenges presented with the current situation. The funeral home management should stay informed regarding current recommendations to protect their staff and families of the deceased.

References:

- [CDC COVID-19 and Funerals \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#funerals\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#funerals).
- [CDC Resources for Businesses and Employers \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html).
- [CDC Interim Guidance for Collection and Submission of Postmortem Specimens from Deceased Persons Under Investigation for COVID-19, February 2020 \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-postmortem-specimens.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-postmortem-specimens.html).
- [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) in Healthcare Settings \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html).