Guidance for Hmong Funerals during COVID-19

12/16/2020

The Minnesota Department of Health prepared this guidance with Hmong Community Leaders and Cultural and Spiritual Leaders. The guidance is both for business owners of funeral homes and for the Hmong community about how to carry out all funerals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important to know that this guidance is in addition to and does not take the place of the COVID-19 Preparedness Plan that is required of all business owners and funeral homes. Guidance for developing COVID-19 Preparedness Plans can be found at Stay Safe Guidance (https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp).

Safety measures to protect yourself and your community

COVID-19 is thought to spread easily mainly from person-to-person. The virus spreads easily between people who are in close contact with one another (within 6 feet), and respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing, or talking. A person may also get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. Protect yourself and your community by:

- Wearing a face covering in all indoor businesses and public indoor spaces, as required by Executive Order 20-81 as of July 25, 2020. For more information, see Masks and face coverings (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks).
- Face coverings are also strongly recommended outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained.
- Washing your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
- Staying 6 feet away from others who are not in your household.
- Avoid shaking hands with others and consider other non-physical greetings.
- Staying home if you or anyone in your household are sick, positive for COVID-19, or have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Staying home if you have been in close contact with someone who is sick, positive for COVID-19, or has symptoms of COVID-19.
- Staying home if you are sick and still waiting for your COVID-19 test result or are still in quarantine and waiting for a COVID-19 test result.

- Encouraging people who are at high-risk to not attend funerals during this time. See CDC: People at Increased Risk (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html).

- Using technology to allow families to attend remotely.


**Requirements for funerals under Executive Order 20-103**

Executive Order 20-103, which dials back on certain activities from Friday, Dec. 18, 2020, 11:59 p.m. through Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021, at 11:59 p.m., does not impact funeral services (or weddings or planned religious services), but receptions, celebrations, and gatherings connected to these services are limited. Venues hosting planned services permitted under Executive Order 20-103 must follow the guidance in this document. For more information on Executive Order 20-103 please visit: Emergency Executive Order 20-103 (https://www.leg.mn.gov/archive/execorders/20-103.pdf).

Under Executive Order 20-103, the following requirements apply to funerals:

- Funeral homes will be able to continue to provide funeral services and ceremonies, provided these venues have and implement a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan that follows the requirements for staff, building, and participants to minimize the spread of COVID-19 as described in Preparedness Plan Requirements for Faith-Based Communities, Places of Worship, Weddings, and Funerals (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefait.pdf).

- The participants in funeral services and ceremonies must remain seated or stationary throughout the event, with the following exception:
  - Directed or controlled movement is permitted when essential to the service (e.g., directing individuals to available or assigned seating, communion, creating a queue to honor the remains of someone who has died), and is planned by the organizers of the service.

- Organizers of a service must prepare and implement controls such as seating or standing areas that are clearly set apart or marked, and establish clear, controlled, and directed queuing when engaged in movement to ensure that people maintain a distance of 6 feet from other households at all times and that uncontrolled movement does not occur during a service.

- All uncontrolled gathering, moving about, or mingling are prohibited, when connected to the services mentioned above and throughout the entire funeral event.

- People attending a planned funeral service or ceremony must not mingle or socialize before, during, or after the service, as this type of contact creates an increased risk of transmission.

- Anyone speaking or singing are encouraged to keep their mask on. Anyone singing or playing wind instruments must keep a distance of at least 12 feet from anyone that they are facing.
• Food preparation, eating, and drinking is not allowed inside any funeral facility. If food is prepared and catered from outside restaurants, organizers of the service can offer single serving pre-packaged meals outside the facility for take home.

• Given the surge of COVID-19 cases we are experiencing, it is critically important that workers and attendees stay home if sick or exposed to COVID-19, maintain distance of at least 6 feet between people from different households, and wear face coverings in compliance with Executive Order 20-81.

• While planned services may occur between Friday, Dec. 18, 2020, 11:59 p.m. and Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021, at 11:59 p.m., any time people gather they risk exposure to COVID-19. Virtual services are strongly recommended and in-person services are advised to include the smallest number of participants possible.

**Hours of services**

The recommendation for hours of service is up to 10-12 hours. MDH is unable to know what the “safe” amount of time is but based on what we know, longer interactions between people increase the risk of transmitting the virus. Because the virus can linger in the air, it is important for people to keep their time in the shared space as short as possible. Minimizing the number of people and the time of interaction can lower the risk during the pandemic.

For more information visit [CDC: Considerations for Events and Gatherings](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html).

**Facility capacity requirements**

Hmong funeral services must follow these requirements as mandated by the Governor's EO 20-103:

A. In all settings, ensure a minimum of 6 feet of physical distancing between households.

B. In indoor settings, occupancy must not exceed 50 percent of the normal occupant capacity as determined by the fire marshal, with a maximum of 250 people in a single self-contained space.

C. In outdoor settings, gatherings must not exceed 250 individuals.

D. Develop and implement a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in accordance with applicable guidance available at [Stay Safe Minnesota](https://staysafe.mn.gov).

For more information on Executive Order 20-103 please visit: [Emergency Executive Order 20-103](https://www.leg.mn.gov/archive/execorders/20-103.pdf)

**Cultural religious practices**

The Hmong 18 Council and other cultural leaders in the Hmong community advise the following minimum cultural practices needed to complete a Hmong funeral.
Basic guidelines for traditional Hmong funeral

**Txheej txheem kev nruam sim (Ntees ploj tuag)**

The traditional Hmong funeral can be conducted in as short a time as a day-long service. The minimum proceedings that should be conducted are as follow:

*Hais txog lub ntees tuag uas siv ib hnub ua xwb los yeej tau lawm. Yam uas yuav tsum tau ua xwb xwb li ces muaj raws li nram qab no:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Hmong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Spiritual Guide’s song to guide the Decedent’s spirit back to the Ancestors.</td>
<td>1. <em>Taws kev rau tus neeg nruam sim.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reed pipes (qeej) song to acknowledge and confirm the death of the Decedent and prepare the Decedent for the Journey to the Ancestors.</td>
<td>2. <em>Zaj qeej tu siav rau tus neeg nruam sim. Yuav tsum tshuab tab xwb, tsis txhob tshuab txooj.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reed pipes (qeej) song to hoist the Decedent onto his/her Winged Steed and to give him/her their offerings to take with them on their Journey to the Ancestors.</td>
<td>3. <em>Zaj qeej tsa nees. Cob tu npua tsa nees rau tus neeg nruam sim coj mus ua noob.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reed pipes (qeej) song to accompany the serving of breakfast, lunch and dinner.</td>
<td>4. <em>Qeej tshais, qeej su, thiab qeej hmos.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reed pipes (qeej) song offering additional spiritual live stocks, if any.</td>
<td>5. <em>Yog muaj tsiaj cob hauv qhua ces tshuab qeej cob tsiaj, yog tsis muaj ces tsis tshuab.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Reed pipes (qeej) song offering money to the Decedent from Family members.</td>
<td>6. <em>Zaj qeej hlawv ntawv tub ki thiab hauv qhua rau tus neeg nruam sim.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reed pipes (qeej) song signifying the departure from the funeral home to the final resting place of the Decedent.</td>
<td>7. <em>Zaj qeej sawv kev xa tus neeg nruam sim mus rau nws lub vaj lub tsev tshiab.</em></td>
</tr>
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*Reed pipes (qeej) songs are accompanied by Drummers*
Funeral proceeding with invited guests of honor and blessing ceremony

*Lub ntees nruam sim muaj hauv qhua thiab hai*s *xim*

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<td>1. As for the invited honor guests, there is no need for the 2 chickens and the pig. What are needed are 1 bundle of cutout joss paper, 1 bottle of alcoholic beverage, 1 bag of rice and a piece of meat along with the so-called sunshine money.</td>
<td>1. <em>Hais txog kev ua hauv qhua tsis txhob npaj 2 tug qab thiab tus npua lawm. Qhov yuav tau npaj yog 1 ntshua</em> <em>ntawv, 1 poom cawv, 1 diav mov thiab 1 ntshiv nqaij coj tuaj ua kev cai nrog rau qhov nyiaj tshav ntuj.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There’s no need to set up the table for distributing the meat brought by the invited guests of honor.</td>
<td>2. <em>Tsis muaj lub rooj faib hauv qhua su lawm.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If the family of the deceased wished to have the blessing ceremony, then just set up the table for that only and no need to set up one for the invited honor guests and relatives of the deceased. Once the table for the blessing ceremony is set, then the invited guests of honor like the cuab tsav (distinguished leader of the family’s), muam phauj (paternal grand aunt) and txiv dab laug (maternal uncle) will turn facing the deceased (casket) and make remarks, concluding that all of the wrong doing committed by the deceased has been resolved. The deceased no longer bears any blames and that the deceased is released cleared of any blames and can leave the physical self. Once completed, the invited guests of honor will turn to give a few words of blessing for the family of the deceased. Once that is completed, then the master of ceremony will start the main blessing ceremony.</td>
<td>3. <em>Yog tus uas tsev neeg yuav kom hai</em>s <em>xim xwb no ces muab lub rooj xim xwb, tsis muaj rooj rau kev neej kev tsav zaum. Yog thaum rub tau lub rooj hai</em>s xim lawm ces thov cov hai<em>s qhua xws li cuab tsav, muam phauj, thiab txiv dab laug los hai</em>s lus rau tus neeg nruam sim tias nws tus plaub xo xaiv ncej tug muab hai<em>s tiaw lawm. Nws tsis muaj plaub ntug lawm nws mus dawb mus huv. Ces tig muab ob peb lo lus koob lus hmoov hai</em>s rau tsev xyom cuab tas ces tso rau txiv coj xai lawm xwb.*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are the guidelines if it is limited to just a one-day services. If more days are used, then there will be more ceremonies than these.

*Cov Txheej Txheem tsuas muaj li no yog hai*s tias siv ib hnub ua xwb. Yog siv ob hnub ces nws kuj muaj ntau dua no.*
## Personnel recommendations

**Thawj lwm tub ncig**

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>1. Family Representative; one</td>
<td>1. <em>Ib tug Thawj Xyom Cuab</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Funeral Service Managers; two</td>
<td>2. <em>Ob tug Kav Xwm</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reed pipes (qeej) and Drum (Nruag) Players; three</td>
<td>3. <em>Peb tug Txiv Qeej &amp; Txiv Nruag</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Spiritual Guide (To lead the spirit back to the Ancestors); one</td>
<td>4. <em>Ib tug Txiv Taw Kev.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Family Spiritual Leader; one</td>
<td>5. <em>Ib tug Txiv Cuab Tsav.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information, call the Minnesota Helpline at 651-297-1304 or 1-800-657-3504.