Guidance for Hmong Funerals during COVID-19

2/12/2021

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 spreads easily between people who are in close contact with one another (within 6 feet), and through 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 following the requirements and recommendations below.

**REQUIREMENTS**

- Stay 6 feet away from others who are not in your household.
- Wear a face covering in all indoor businesses and public indoor spaces, as required by Executive Order 20-81. For more information, see Masks and face coverings (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.
- Stay home if you or anyone in your household are sick, positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or if you are still waiting for your COVID-19 test results because of being sick or being in quarantine.
- Stay home if you have been in close contact with someone who is sick, positive for COVID-19, or has symptoms of COVID-19.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Avoid handshakes and consider other non-physical greetings.
Encourage people who are at high-risk to not attend funerals in-person during this time. See CDC: People at Increased Risk (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html).

Use technology to allow families to attend remotely. While planned services may occur, 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.


Requirements under Executive Order 21-01 as amended by EO 21-07

Executive Order (EO) 21-07 will go into effect Saturday, Feb. 13 at 12:00 p.m. (noon) and is an amendment to EO 21-01 which does not have an end date. Venues hosting funerals must continue to comply with the requirements set forth in EO 21-01, as amended by EO 21-07, along with the requirements provided in this document, to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Venues hosting planned services and other gatherings must follow the guidance in this document and other documents referenced in this document as they apply to specific activities. For more information on Executive Orders, please visit: Executive Orders from Governor Walz (https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp).

Whenever people gather together in-person, COVID-19 can be easily spread. People may be more likely to let their guard down when gathering with close family and friends, which can increase the risk of spread. COVID-19 also spreads more easily when people talk and interact with each other and when they share food or meals together without face coverings. People who do not know they have COVID-19 can spread the virus.

Facility capacity requirements

In all settings and activities, ensure a minimum of 6 feet of distance between households.

1. For a service or ceremony at a funeral home, a place of worship, or other venue, capacity must be limited to allow for 6 feet of social distancing, up to a maximum of 50% capacity. For this type of activity, follow the guidance below and the Preparedness Plan Requirements for Faith-Based Communities, Places of Worship, Weddings, and Funerals (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefaith.pdf).

2. For a time to gather or visit without food and beverages, capacity must be limited to allow for 6 feet of social distancing, no more than 25% capacity, and no more than 250 people, whichever is less. For this type of activity, follow Requirements for Celebrations and Significant Life Events (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safeevents.pdf).

3. When sharing food and beverages or a meal, capacity must be limited to allow for 6 feet of social distancing, and no more than 25% capacity or 50 people, whichever is less. For this type of activity, follow Requirements for Celebrations and Significant Life Events (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safeevents.pdf).

If a funeral includes more than one of the above activities, you must adjust your capacity limits and actions for each activity to meet the requirements that apply.

These activities can occur separately or one at a time in sequence. If these activities occur at the same time in the same venue, the event and venue must adhere to the most restrictive applicable capacity limits.

Organizers of the funeral may offer single-serving, pre-packaged meals for take-home consumption.
Funeral services or ceremonies requirements

- Funeral homes must have and implement a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan that follows the requirements for the building, staff, 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/safefaith.pdf).

- The participants in funeral services and ceremonies must remain seated or stationary throughout the event, and any movement should be conducted as follows:
  - 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. Uncontrolled movement must not occur during a service or ceremony.

- Venues hosting planned services must not allow uncontrolled mingling or gathering before or after the service without further limiting attendance, as this increases the risk of transmission. If food or beverages are brought and consumed on site from outside restaurants or caterers, this will also limit the number of people allowed to attend. Gatherings with mingling or that offer food and beverages must follow the capacity limitations and other requirements in the Gathering Requirements for Celebrations and Significant Life Events (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safeevents.pdf).

- Anyone who is speaking or singing is encouraged to keep their mask on. Singing and other musical activities must follow the guidance for Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19 (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf). Among other requirements, this guidance requires increased distance (i.e., 12 feet) between performers and other attendees.

- Given the present level of COVID-19 community spread, 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.

Hours of services

MDH recommends that services do not exceed 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.

Under EO 21-01 as amended by EO 21-07, events serving food or beverages must not take place between 11 p.m. and 4 a.m.

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

For more information on Executive Orders, please visit: Executive Orders from Governor Walz (https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp).
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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Spiritual Guide’s song to guide the Decedent’s spirit back to the Ancestors.</td>
<td>1. Tows kev rau tus neeg nruam sim.</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. Zaj qeej tu siav rau tus neeg nruam sim. Yuav tsum tshuab tab xwb, tsis txhob tshuab txooj.</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. Zaj qeej tsa nees. Cob tu npua tsa nees rau tus neeg nruam sim coj mus ua noob.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reed pipes (qeej) song to accompany the serving of breakfast, lunch and dinner.</td>
<td>4. Qeej tshais, qeej su, thiab qeej hmos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reed pipes (qeej) song offering additional spiritual live stocks, if any.</td>
<td>5. Yog muaj tsiaj cob hauv qhua ces tshuab qeej cob tsiaj, yog tsis muaj ces tsis tshuab.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Reed pipes (qeej) song offering money to the Decedent from Family members.</td>
<td>6. Zaj qeej hlawv ntawv tub ki thiab hauv qhua rau tus neeg nruam sim.</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. Zaj qeej sawv kev xa tus neeg nruam sim mus rau nws lub vaj lub tsev tshiab.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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 hais xim*

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<tr>
<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 qaib thiab tus npua lawm. Qhov yuav tau npaj yog 1 ntshuaas ntawv, 1 poom cawv, 1 dial mov thiab 1 ntshiv nqajj 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 hais xim xwb no ces muab lub rooj xim xwb, tsis muaj rooj rau kev neej kev tsav zaum. Yog thaum rub tau lub rooj hais xim lawm ces thov cov hauv qhua xws li cuab tsav, muam phauj, thiab txiv dab laug los hais lus rau tus neeg nruam sim tias nws tus plaub xo xaiv ncej tug muab hais tiav lawm. Nws tsis muaj plaub ntug lawm nws mus dawb mus huv. Ces tig muab ob peb lo lus koob lus hmoov hais rau tsev xyom cuab tas ces tso rau txiv coj xai lawm xwb.</em></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 hais tias siv ib hnub ua xwb. Yog siv ob hnub ces nws kuj muaj ntau dua no.*
Personnel recommendations

**Thawj lwm tub ncig**

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