

Guidance for Hmong Funerals during COVID-19

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 \(https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp\)](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 \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks\)](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, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have been in close contact with someone who is sick, positive for COVID-19, or has symptoms of COVID-19.
- Encouraging people who are at high-risk to not attend funerals during this time. [CDC: People Who Are at Increased Risk for Severe Illness \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html).

- Using technology to allow families to attend remotely.

Learn more about how COVID-19 is spread by visiting [CDC: How COVID-19 Spreads \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html).

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. 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 \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html\)](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:

- A. In all settings, the number of occupants must allow for occupants to maintain the required physical distancing of at least 6 feet between people who do not live in the same household.
- B. In indoor settings where food and beverages are not being served, occupancy must not exceed 50% of the total capacity, with a maximum of 250 people in a single self-contained space at any given time during the funeral services. The 50% capacity must also allow for people to be at least 6 feet apart from people in other households.
 - a. **Note:** If food and beverage are served on-site, the capacity must not exceed 25% of normal occupancy, with a maximum of 250 people in a single self-contained space.
- C. In outdoor settings, gatherings must not exceed 250 people.

For more information, see page 5 of the Governor’s [Emergency Executive Order 20-74 \(https://mn.gov/governor/assets/EO%2020-74%20Final_tcm1055-437539.pdf\)](https://mn.gov/governor/assets/EO%2020-74%20Final_tcm1055-437539.pdf).

Requirements for preparing and serving food and beverages

The methods for safely serving food and beverages for on-site consumption must be part of a COVID-19 Business Preparedness Plan. Food and beverage are allowed as long as the COVID-19 Plan includes protections such as oversight of the self-service area to ensure physical distancing of at least 6 feet is maintained, hands are being sanitized, and face masks are worn at all times.

- Ensure a minimum of 6 feet of physical distance between individuals from different households.
- Limit indoor and outdoor occupant **capacity to no more than 25% of normal occupant capacity up to 250 persons** if food and beverages are to be consumed.

- If seated, limit tables to four persons, or six if they are part of one family unit. Tables should be spaced sufficiently far apart that persons from different tables are at least 6 feet apart from each other.
- Require volunteers to wear masks and gloves when preparing food.
- Best practice would be to prepackage single-serving food ahead of time as much as possible. Please refer [Minnesota Department of Agriculture: Customers Best Practices For Reusable Bags & Food Takeout Containers \(https://www.mda.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/inline-files/COVID-19%20Reusable%20Bags-Takeout%20Containers%20BPs%20Mar%202020.pdf\)](https://www.mda.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/inline-files/COVID-19%20Reusable%20Bags-Takeout%20Containers%20BPs%20Mar%202020.pdf).
- Do not share food and drinks or utensils.

For more information, see [Guidance for Safe Celebrations and Events \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safeevents.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safeevents.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 hnuab ua xwb los yeej tau lawm. Yam uas yuav tsum tau ua xwb xwb li ces muaj raws li nram qab no:

English	Hmong
1. Spiritual Guide’s song to guide the Decedent’s spirit back to the Ancestors.	1. <i>Taws kev rau tus neeg nruam sim.</i>
2. Reed pipes (qeej) song to acknowledge and confirm the death of the Decedent and prepare the Decedent for the Journey to the Ancestors.	2. <i>Zaj qeej tu siav rau tus neeg nruam sim. Yuav tsum tshuab tab xwb, tsis txhob tshuab txooj.</i>
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.	3. <i>Zaj qeej tsa nees. Cob tu npua tsa nees rau tus neeg nruam sim koj mus ua noob.</i>
4. Reed pipes (qeej) song to accompany the serving of breakfast, lunch and dinner.	4. <i>Qeej tshais, qeej su, thiab qeej hmos.</i>
5. Reed pipes (qeej) song offering additional spiritual live stocks, if any.	5. <i>Yog muaj tsiaj cob hauv qhua ces tshuab qeej cob tsiaj, yog tsis muaj ces tsis tshuab.</i>

<i>English</i>	<i>Hmong</i>
6. Reed pipes (qeej) song offering money to the Decedent from Family members.	6. <i>Zaj qeej hlawv ntawv tub ki thiab hauv qhua rau tus neeg nruam sim.</i>
7. Reed pipes (qeej) song signifying the departure from the funeral home to the final resting place of the Decedent.	7. <i>Zaj qeej sawv kev xa tus neeg nruam sim mus rau nws lub vaj lub tsev tshiab.</i>

*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

<i>English</i>	<i>Hmong</i>
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.	1. <i>Hais txog kev ua hauv qhua tsis txhob npaj 2 tug qaib thiab tus npua lawm. Qhov yuav tau npaj yog 1 ntshuas ntawv, 1 poom cawv, 1 diav mov thiab 1 ntshiv nqaij coj tuaj ua kev cai nrog rau qhov nyiaj tshav ntuj.</i>
2. There's no need to set up the table for distributing the meat brought by the invited guests of honor.	2. <i>Tsis muaj lub rooj faib hauv qhua su lawm.</i>
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.	3. <i>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.</i>

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 hnuab ua xwb. Yog siv ob hnuab ces nws kuj muaj ntau dua no.

Personnel recommendations

Thawj lwm tub ncig

English	Hmong
1. Family Representative; one	1. <i>Ib tug Thawj Xyom Cuab</i>
2. Funeral Service Managers; two	2. <i>Ob tug Kav Xwm</i>
3. Reed pipes (qeej) and Drum (Nruag) Players; three	3. <i>Peb tug Txiv Qeej & Txiv Nruag</i>
4. Spiritual Guide (To lead the spirit back to the Ancestors); one	4. <i>Ib tug Txiv Taw Kev.</i>
5. Family Spiritual Leader; one	5. <i>Ib tug Txiv Cuab Tsav.</i>
6. Volunteers; Food Preparation and Cooks	6. <i>Tswj Kab los yog Niam Ua Mov ces tsis muaj lawm vim tsis muaj noj mov rau ntawm tsev pam tuag lawm. Yog muaj ib tug tau nruam sim lub sij hawm no ces yog tsev kwv tij pab ua pem tsev lawm xwb.</i>

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



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