

Planning Funeral and Memorial Services during COVID-19

1/15/2021

Venues hosting planned funeral and memorial services must comply with the guidance in [Preparedness Plan Requirements for Faith-Based Communities, Places of Worship, Weddings, and Funerals \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefait.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safefait.pdf). In general, a service must have controlled movement and must not involve food and beverage, with certain exceptions (e.g., communion). Consult with the venue hosting each service for more details on requirements for services.

There is separate guidance for receptions and other social gatherings related to services and ceremonies. Refer to the [Gathering Requirements for Celebrations and Significant Life Events \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safeevents.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safeevents.pdf) for guidance. Due to current levels of COVID-19 transmission, receptions, and social gatherings after funeral and memorial services that involve food and beverage must be significantly limited in size. Again, consult with the host venue for more details.

When a loved one dies, we all want to be able to honor their life safely. Funerals, memorial services, visitations, burial rites, and special meals or other gatherings have been important ways to grieve together. Unfortunately, whenever you gather with others, there is a risk of spreading COVID-19. It is very difficult for people to come together in person and maintain the distancing and masking requirements. There have been COVID-19 outbreaks as the result of gatherings for funerals and memorial services. We all have a role to play in stopping the spread of this virus, and we must do things differently right now for our own safety and the safety of others.

Funeral homes, faith organizations, or other venues are required to have a COVID-19 Plan in place that all participants must follow. This plan states the specific ways to keep participants and staff safer, and includes distancing, masking, and capacity limit requirements.

At this time, virtual services are the safest option and are strongly recommended. People can participate from home, offer comfort, tell stories, see photos, listen to presenters, and share their grief with others. Even if an in-person event is planned, offer a virtual option for those unable to attend and for those at higher risk (older adults and those with underlying health conditions).

If gathering in person, these **requirements** will help keep people safer:

- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, shortness of breath, etc.) or who has been exposed to COVID-19 in the last 14 days needs to stay home.

- Participants must remain **seated or stationary** throughout the event and only move in a directed way, appropriately distanced from others, as a planned part of the service or ceremony (such as communion during a service or forming a queue to honor the remains of someone who has died).
- Maintain 6 feet of distance between people not living in the same household.
- Wear a face covering (mask) at all times.
- Cover coughs or sneezes and wash or clean hands.

Consider the following options:

- Keep the in-person event as small as possible, with just immediate family, or a defined guest list. Friends and relatives are not automatically safer when it comes to COVID-19.
- Have an outdoor event, such as a drive-by procession, if possible.
- Keep in-person event(s) as brief as possible, especially if indoors.
- Use ushers to encourage people to stay 6 feet from others and wear a mask (hand out masks for anyone not arriving with one), and direct people when entering and exiting to avoid too many people in one area.

Resources and videos

- [CDC: Funeral Guidance for Individuals and Families \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/funeral-guidance.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/funeral-guidance.html)
- [Guidance for Vehicle Gatherings, Parades, and Drive-ins \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vehiclegather.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vehiclegather.pdf)
- [Indoor Air Considerations: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/indoorair.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/indoorair.html)
- [Best Practices for Masks: Considerations for People with Disabilities and Special Health Needs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidemasks.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidemasks.pdf)
- [MDH How COVID-19 Spreads \(video\): https://youtu.be/0jdKdulpc_Y](https://youtu.be/0jdKdulpc_Y)
- [MDH How to Wash Your Hands \(video\): https://youtu.be/3zElj70dYJ4](https://youtu.be/3zElj70dYJ4)
- [MDH How to Safely Wear a Mask \(video\): https://youtu.be/6Z9bd0vMZGU](https://youtu.be/6Z9bd0vMZGU)
- [MDH COVID-19 Mask Do's and Don'ts \(video\): https://youtu.be/_w2-p4MsAqU](https://youtu.be/_w2-p4MsAqU)

For information on COVID-19 in more languages, please visit [Materials and Resources for COVID-19 Response \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html).

The Minnesota Department of Health Mortuary Science Section has authority to enforce COVID-19 requirements under [Executive Order 20-74, paragraph 11 \(www.leg.mn.gov/archive/execorders/20-74.pdf\)](http://www.leg.mn.gov/archive/execorders/20-74.pdf). To express concerns, please contact Minnesota Department of Health: Mortuary Science Section at 651-201-3829, health.mortsci@state.mn.us.

For more information, visit [Stay Safe MN \(staysafe.mn.gov\)](http://staysafe.mn.gov).



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Contact health.communications@state.mn.us to request an alternate format.