

## COVID-19 Funeral and Mortuary Science Guidance Updated 7/9/2020

### Infection Control Guidance for Funeral Homes

- [Standard infection control practices](#) should be used for handling a deceased person who has died from COVID-19. Standard [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#), including facial protection, should be used by the mortician when preparing the body or embalming, especially if splashing of fluids is expected. Follow routine cleaning and disinfection procedures using an [EPA-registered, hospital-grade disinfectant](#) to clean the mortuary work area and the outside of a body bag, if applicable.
- People should avoid touching the body of someone who has died of COVID-19. Older people and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions are at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness. There may be less of a chance of the virus spreading from certain types of touching, such as holding the hand or hugging after the body has been prepared for viewing. Other activities, such as kissing, washing, and shrouding should be avoided before, during, and after the body has been prepared, if possible. If washing the body or shrouding are important religious or cultural practices, families are encouraged to work with their community's cultural and religious leaders and funeral home staff on how to reduce their exposure as much as possible. At a minimum, people conducting these activities should wear disposable gloves. If splashing of fluids is expected, additional PPE may be required (such as disposable gown, face shield or goggles and N-95 respirator).
- The deceased can be buried or cremated following current state guidelines.
- Funeral homes should implement [measures that mitigate the exposure and spread of COVID-19 among its workforce](#).

Guidance about safely handling and collecting post-mortem specimens: [CDC's COVID-19 Postmortem Guidance](#).

### General Guidance for Funerals

- Governor Kemp's "Empowering a Healthy Georgia" executive order prohibits gatherings of more than 50 people if social distancing of 6 feet or more between people cannot be maintained. However, even if social distancing is possible, the National Funeral Directors Association strongly recommends that funerals be limited to immediate family and close friends of the decedent.
- 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. However, people should consider not touching the body of someone who has died of COVID-19.
- People who were in recent contact with the deceased and may have been exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 should not attend.
- People who feel sick, have been exposed to COVID-19, or are part of an at-risk group (people who are older or have severe underlying health conditions) should stay home.
- Attendees should stay 6 feet away from others, wear cloth face coverings, wash/sanitize hands frequently, and avoid direct contact like handshakes, hugging, and kissing at the service or funeral.
- Funeral homes should:
  - Consider offering livestreaming as an option for these services/viewings;
  - Discourage families from providing food or beverages;

- Supply tissues and alcohol-based hand rubs for the families to use; and
- Stock an adequate supply of soap and paper towels in the restrooms.

Ultimately, funeral homes should determine how to best balance this guidance with the needs of their families. Each funeral home should develop a plan to manage challenges presented by the current situation. COVID-19 is a novel illness, and health officials are still learning more about the disease as it continues to spread in our communities. Funeral home managers should stay up to date regarding [current COVID-19 recommendations](#) to protect their staff and families of the deceased.

#### **References and Additional Resources**

- [National Funeral Directors Association COVID-19 Guidelines for Visitations and Funerals](#)
- [CDC Funeral Guidance for Families](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 FAQs](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Resources for Businesses and Employers](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations](#)