

## COVID-19 Funeral and Mortuary Science Guidance Updated 4/8/2020

### Infection Control Guidance for Funeral Homes

- [Standard infection control practices](#) should be used for handling a decedent 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 consider not touching the body of someone who has died as a result of COVID-19. There may be less 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 washing the body or shrouding are important religious or cultural practices, families are encouraged to work with their community cultural and religious leaders and funeral home staff on how to reduce their exposure as much as possible.
- Decedents can be buried or cremated following current state guidelines.

For additional information, please see [CDC's COVID-19 Postmortem Guidance](#).

### General Guidance for Funerals

- 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, if the deceased died from COVID-19, please do not touch the body.
- If you were in recent contact with the COVID-19 victim, you should not attend.
- People who feel sick or are part of an at-risk group (people who are older or have severe underlying health conditions) should stay home.
- Services with more than 10 people where most participants are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be postponed or canceled. Services should adhere to local county/city emergency orders.
- Avoid large funerals if possible. Funerals should have no more than 50 people in attendance, or should not fill up 50% of the funeral home or church.
- Attendees should stay 6 feet away from others. Avoid direct contact like handshakes, hugging, and kissing at the service or funeral.
- Funeral homes should:
  - Suggest that families postpone the funeral until the restrictions on numbers of attendees are lifted; this might be for several months or longer
  - 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
  - Stock adequate supply of soap and paper towels in the rest rooms

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. The funeral home management should stay up to date regarding [current COVID-19 recommendations](#) to protect their staff and families of the deceased.

### **References and Additional Resources**

- [CDC COVID-19 Funeral FAQs](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Resources for Businesses and Employers](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations](#)