

## **COVID-19 Funeral, Burial and Cremation Information**

Our deepest sympathies go out to all New Yorkers who have lost friends and loved ones during this difficult time. We have been working with funeral homes, crematories, hospitals, and nursing homes throughout the five boroughs during the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency and are doing everything possible to ensure that those we've lost are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives. All New Yorkers deserve to celebrate, honor, and memorialize their loved ones. Even as we make arrangements for our loved ones who have passed, we must continue to practice social distancing, good hand hygiene, and infection prevention. If you are sick, you must stay home and refrain from attending the funeral service, viewing and burial. By staying home, you help slow the spread of the disease and can protect others from getting sick.

### **Funeral Homes**

Funeral director services are seeing unprecedented requests and we are working with them to help increase capacity and decrease delays. Families of loved ones who have passed away from COVID-19 should call the funeral home of their choice which can oversee the transfer, burial or cremation, and services.

New York State provides a list of NYC funeral homes [here](#).

### **City Burial**

In the event that a family desires a City-provided burial, OCME, as the City mortuary, will facilitate the process, which includes caring for all remains in their custody with dignity and respect. OCME will also coordinate this process for victims whose remains are unidentified and/or unclaimed.

For unclaimed remains, or for loved ones who may need additional time to coordinate funeral home services, the OCME will provide temporary storage of a decedent for a minimum of 15 days. As we aim to accommodate the many New Yorkers who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic we continue to work with families to address their needs during this difficult time.

For more information, visit [nyc.gov/ocme](https://nyc.gov/ocme)

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What should I do if my loved one passes away at home?**

Call 911. Paramedics, the NYPD, and/or the Medical Examiner's Office will respond. In some cases, the Medical Examiner's Office will authorize direct transfer of the deceased to a funeral home.

### **What should I do if my loved one passes away in a hospital or nursing home?**

Hospitals and nursing homes are responsible for notifying family and coordinating transfer of the deceased to funeral homes. With unusually high numbers of deceased, NYC is providing temporary solutions to support hospitals as they properly care for and transfer the deceased.

In the event that a family cannot make arrangements directly with a funeral home, hospitals and nursing homes can transfer the deceased to the City's Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) which will work with families to ensure their loved one is properly buried.

### **Can we have a funeral?**

Yes. However, guests must continue to practice physical distancing precautions, including remaining at least 6 feet apart from others. This means you should not hug, kiss, hold hands, or otherwise touch others in attendance.

Funerals should be limited to immediate family and as few people as possible. Many funeral homes have created attendance limits based on these requirements so please check in advance.

Many funeral homes are offering live-streaming, video conferencing, and other remote options for people who cannot attend in person.

### **Where can I find a list of funeral homes in New York City?**

New York State provides a list of NYC funeral homes [here](#).

### **Can I touch, shroud, or wash the body of my loved one who has passed away from COVID-19?**

There is still a lot to learn about COVID-19 and how it spreads. As such, you should not touch the body of someone who was confirmed to have COVID-19 or who may have had COVID-19 (they had cold or flu symptoms but never tested for COVID-19). Kissing, washing, and shrouding should be avoided before, during, and after the body has been prepared.

### **Can we still perform religious or other customs, rituals, and traditions?**

Funeral directors and/or religious leaders can provide recommendations on how to safely honor a loved one.

If washing or dressing the body are important religious or cultural practices, you should work with your community, cultural and religious leaders, and funeral home staff to reduce any potential risk of infection. This includes wearing protective equipment, such as gloves.

### **I can't afford burial expenses, what should I do?**

Low-income City residents may be eligible to receive up to \$900 in financial assistance to meet funeral expenses for a deceased low-income New York City resident family member. Eligible burial expenses may not cost more than \$1,700.

Download burial claim instructions and an application [here](#).

For help by phone, call 311. Assistance provided in multiple languages.

**Do I need a death certificate to hold a funeral?**

Yes. You can request a [NYC death certificate online](#) or by mailing a copy of the certificate application. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person ordering of NYC death certificates is suspended until further notice.

**Is a COVID-19 decedent dangerous to funeral home employees, embalmers or autopsy technicians?**

Funeral homes are directed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to follow routine prevention and control precautions, including requiring that staff wear personal protective equipment (PPE) and follow disinfection protocols.

There are currently no restrictions against or guidelines for embalming, cremating, or burying someone who died as a result of COVID-19. However, to comply with social distancing restrictions, only one funeral can be held at a time.

**Where can I find out more information about burials for veterans?**

For more information on burials for veterans, visit [va.gov/burials-memorials](https://va.gov/burials-memorials).

**What does the City do to respect religious guidelines around burial, such as cremation or burial within a short time frame?**

OCME has a long history of working closely with faith communities and leaders to accommodate religious needs relating to the release of decedents from OCME custody. OCME will continue to work funeral homes and families to expedite release of cases with such needs.

**Can community members claim the remains of a decedent if they have no next of kin in the United States?**

Yes. This is already happening in some faith communities.

**Can funeral directors repatriate the remains of foreign nationals?**

Funeral Directors have received guidance from their associations and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) regarding transporting remains of a COVID+ individual to their home countries. Each country has their own requirements surrounding COVID+ remains and requests for specific paperwork and Funeral Directors should contact the specific consulates for further guidance.

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