UPDATED RECOMMENDATION 05.01.2020

Ohio Funeral Directors Association Urges Member Funeral Homes to Follow Best Practices in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

The Ohio Funeral Directors Association (OFDA) remains committed to providing our membership with resources that ensure the health and well-being of funeral professionals, as well as the families they compassionately serve. A safe environment to work and gather in is vital to limiting the spread of COVID-19 among staff and the public.

Governor DeWine and the Ohio Department of Health issued protocols on April 27th on how various businesses can reopen beginning May 1st. The Director’s Stay Safe Ohio Order issued on April 30th extends the current Order through May 29th, therefore, funerals remain exempt from the limits on mass gatherings. However, there is nothing to indicate funerals and funeral homes would be exempt from social distancing, wearing of masks or spacing of customers. Funeral homes must keep this restriction in mind when setting limits and working out logistics for visitations and funeral services with the family. As a private business, each funeral home is free to set its own restrictions on the size and nature of ceremonies in order to protect the safety and health of its staff and the community, while being mindful of the new Responsible RestartOhio directives.

On May 1st, your Board of Directors approved the updated recommended procedures listed below.

- All funeral home employees must wear face coverings, unless exempted by a medical, safety or practicality concern.
- Funeral home visitors are encouraged to wear a face covering, unless specifically documented legal, life, health or safety considerations and limited documented security considerations exist. Funeral homes are not required to provide families/visitors masks, but if supplies can be obtained distribution of masks is encouraged.
- Social distancing of at least six-feet separation must be adhered to. It is not necessary to separate family members who reside in same household.
- Separate chapel chairs for the safety of each attendee.
- Educate families on best practices for social distancing and viral control etiquette (i.e. no hugging, kissing or shaking of hands; creating personal space of 6’; cough into crook of elbow).
- Conduct private funeral services. The CDC, NFDA and Ohio Department of Health all recommend gatherings of less than 10 people.
- Omit public calling hours.
- Host larger memorial gatherings at a later date.
- Offer to record and/or live stream events (music and web casting license available to all funeral homes regardless of membership status through NFDA).
• Post tribute videos to funeral home website to virtually share memories.
• Post signs at entrances listing virus symptoms and request those feeling the effects to pay their respects in an alternate manner (i.e. email, written note, phone call to family).
• Encourage online condolences via the funeral home website.
• Post signs near entrance encouraging visitors to adopt social distancing and viral control etiquette (i.e. no hugging, kissing or shaking of hands; creating personal space of 6’; cough into crook of elbow).
• Temporarily cease catering, food, drinks and receptions. If applicable, remove candy or novelty gift to keep hands from gravitating to a central dish.
• At-need and preneed arrangement conferences should be made via telephone calls, FaceTime, video conference and/or other electronic means including emailed documents.
• Funeral homes should use discretion when meeting in person with families that do not have means of telecommunications or electronic communications, limiting the conference to two people.
• Sanitize, sanitize, sanitize

OFDA is actively involved in State of Ohio Emergency Operations Planning efforts and are well aware of the potential devastating impact this virus can have. Ohio has less than 2,800 licensed funeral director/embalmers to care for the deceased and if our network of licensees is compromised by COVID-19, the workforce will be faced with overwhelming challenges. **We care about your health and implore you to exercise aggressive measures in funeral home business practices to limit your exposure.**

**In the event your funeral home is overwhelmed by a surge of deaths or staff becomes ill and unable to adequately handle the volume of calls, please contact OFDA for assistance.**

The OFDA Board of Directors understands the challenges these adjustments present and ultimately, the practices you implement to protect your staff and families is a business decision that only you can make.

Stay safe! Stay healthy!