



Recommendations of the Connecticut Funeral Directors Association to Facilitate the Transfer of a Deceased Patient from Hospice, Nursing Home and Home Care Settings

Updated April 4, 2020

This guidance document for hospice, nursing homes and home care settings will assist you to expedite the process for your staff, families of the decedent and funeral directors. It is essential that we work together to expedite the transfer of decedent so that a family can proceed to make final plans for disposition. Funeral Directors are complying with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Public Health, and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. During this time of a declared public health emergency due to the pandemic, limiting exposure with time and distance is imperative.

- Please have the following immediately available before the arrival of the funeral director: verbal consent documented from next of kin and their contact information so the funeral establishment can quickly reach out to them. We strongly recommend that you have more than one contact person identified and have their contact information available as well.
- The physician in charge of care must be notified and prepared to sign the death certificate without delay so that the final disposition occurs in a timely manner. Delaying this process will cause significant issues with scheduling final disposition, which needs to be avoided due to the potential surge in deaths as a result of the pandemic. In addition, any delay presents undue risks to the funeral home staff who must shelter remains at their facility.
- Before the funeral director arrives, the death shall be certified by the attending physician or Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN). In the absence of physician or APRN, or with the physician's or APRN's approval, the medical certification section of the death certificate may be completed and signed by an associate physician, an APRN, a physician assistant, registered nurse, or the chief medical officer of the institution in which the death occurred. Medical certification by a registered nurse or physician assistant is limited to cases which death was anticipated and such registered nurse or physician assistant made the pronouncement of death.
- In home hospice situations, the pronouncing nurse should have an order from a physician or APRN in the patient's file granting them the authority to certify the death certificate with the cause of death at the same time. This is identical to the nursing home registered nurse being able to certify a death certificate in cases where the death was anticipated and the physician or APRN have made a note in the patient's file granting the registered nurse the authority to certify the death. This will ensure that funeral directors are not required to make a separate trip to have the medical certification completed on the death certificate.
- Please have the release forms and the death certificate with the medical portion completed and ready for the funeral director upon arrival at your facility.



- The certifying physician or their designee should be aware the Department of Public Health and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner have issued a communication to physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants that it is imperative to indicate a proper cause-of-death and sign death certificates immediately in order to facilitate final disposition.
- If a respiratory infection or COVID-19 is the cause of death, you must advise the funeral establishment when the transfer is requested.
- Since COVID-19 is a respiratory virus, before the funeral director arrives, the patient should be wrapped in a sheet with airways covered or at least have the face covered to minimize inadvertent aerosolization and respiratory droplet expulsion. Funeral home transfer staff may opt to further disinfect patient airways prior to transfer.
- Hospice or nursing home facilities should follow proper post mortem care, including the use of a holding room as required in the Department of Public Health Blast Fax 2020-21. For nursing homes or hospice facilities that uses pouches, the exterior of every pouch should be properly marked with an identification tag before the arrival of the funeral director.
- If the family is present in any setting (hospice, nursing home or residence), it is imperative that they are asked to disperse before the funeral professionals arrive to transfer the deceased to limit potential exposure to each other.
- Funeral homes, like all health care providers and first responders, are experiencing a severe shortage of PPE equipment. Only appropriate PPE for the circumstances will be used, however, the PPE needed may be alarming to some family members, so please be sure to follow the request that family members not be present.
- If the patient is in hospice, it is recommended that the doors to other patients' rooms be closed during the transfer to limit potential exposure.
- Hospice or home hospice staff's practice of escorting a patient to the transfer vehicle and the use of a facility quilt or 'dignity blanket' should cease at this time.
- For COVID-19 home hospice cases, anyone exposed to COVID-19 should not be present when funeral home staff come to the home to transfer the decedent. Surviving family members or caregivers should be under quarantine off site or in a separate room in the home.