

Planning Funeral and Memorial Services during COVID-19

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When a loved one dies, we all want to be able to honor their life safely. Funerals, memorial services, visitations, burial rites, and special meals or other gatherings have been important ways to grieve together. Unfortunately, whenever you gather with others, there is a risk of spreading COVID-19. It is very difficult for people to come together in person and maintain the distancing and masking requirements. There have been COVID-19 outbreaks as the result of gatherings for funerals and memorial services. We all have a role to play in stopping the spread of this virus, and we must do things differently right now for our own safety and the safety of others.

Funeral homes, faith organizations, or other venues are required to have a COVID-19 Plan in place that all participants must follow. This plan states the specific ways to keep participants and staff safe, and includes distancing, masking, and capacity limit requirements.

If gathering in person, participants must:

- Maintain 6 feet of distance between people not living in the same household.
- Wear a face covering (mask) at all times.
- Cover coughs or sneezes and wash or clean hands.

Consider the following options:

- Virtual services are the safest option. People can participate from home, offer comfort, tell stories, see photos, listen to presenters, and share their grief with others. Even if an in-person event is planned, offer a virtual option for those unable to attend and for those at higher risk (older adults and those with underlying health conditions).
- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, shortness of breath, etc.) or who has been exposed to COVID-19 in the last 14 days needs to stay home.
- Keep the in-person event as small as possible, with just immediate family, or a defined guest list. Friends and relatives are not automatically safer when it comes to COVID-19.
- Have an outdoor event if possible.
- Keep in-person event(s) as brief as possible, especially if indoors.
- Use ushers to encourage people to stay 6 feet from others and wear a mask (hand out masks for anyone not arriving with one), and direct people when entering and exiting to avoid too many people in one area.

- If the gathering is in someone's home or other private setting, still keep 6 feet from others and wear masks. If possible, open doors or a window. Placing a fan in a window to blow air out will also improve indoor air. A home is not automatically safer than other places when people from different households are gathering.

Resources and videos

- [CDC's Funeral Guidance for Individuals and Families: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/funeral-guidance.html.](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/funeral-guidance.html)
- [MDH Guidance for Gatherings and Ceremonies \(PDF\): https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidefaith.pdf](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidefaith.pdf)
- [Best Practices for Masks: Considerations for People with Disabilities and Special Health Needs \(PDF\): www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidemasks.pdf](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidemasks.pdf)
- [MDH How COVID-19 Spreads \(video\): https://youtu.be/0jdKdulpc_Y](https://youtu.be/0jdKdulpc_Y)
- [MDH How to Wash Your Hands \(video\): https://youtu.be/3zElj70dYJ4](https://youtu.be/3zElj70dYJ4)
- [MDH How to Safely Wear a Mask \(video\); https://youtu.be/6Z9bd0vMZGU](https://youtu.be/6Z9bd0vMZGU)
- [MDH COVID-19 Mask Do's and Don'ts \(video\): https://youtu.be/_w2-p4MsAqU](https://youtu.be/_w2-p4MsAqU)

For information on COVID-19 in more languages, please visit [Materials and Resources for COVID-19 Response: https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/materials/index.html)

The Minnesota Department of Health Mortuary Science Section has authority to enforce COVID-19 requirements under [Executive Order 20-74, paragraph 11 \(PDF\): https://www.leg.mn.gov/archive/execorders/20-74.pdf](https://www.leg.mn.gov/archive/execorders/20-74.pdf)

For more information, visit Stay Safe MN: <https://staysafe.mn.gov/>.

To express concerns, please contact:

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