



Department of Health

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Executive Deputy Commissioner

April 10, 2020

DAL: BFD 20-02
Subject: Updated COVID-19 Guidance for Funeral
Directors

Dear Funeral Director:

In response to multiple inquiries from the funeral directing industry throughout the State, the Department of Health (the Department) Bureau of Funeral Directing is distributing the following updated guidance in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The Department reiterates that non-essential gatherings of individuals of any size for any reason are canceled or postponed at this time, pursuant to [Executive Order 202.10](#). Accordingly, the Department recommends that in-person gatherings be avoided unless they are necessary. While funeral homes and cemeteries may continue to operate given their [essential business designation](#) by the Empire State Development Corporation, in-person services should be postponed when possible. If in-person services must be held, the gathering should be limited to only immediate family, with as few persons physically present as possible. Further, funeral homes should prohibit out-of-town participants, unless they are the sole attendees, and maximize social distancing among any in-person attendees (e.g. holding services outside or limiting indoor capacity). In-person funeral participants should be reminded to practice social distancing when encountering someone outside of their immediate household.

Specifically, the Department recommends:

- Whenever possible, work with the family to postpone services to a later date.
- Final disposition, either burial or cremation, should take place as soon as possible.
- Where available, consider live-streaming the committal or funeral services.
- If committal takes place at a cemetery, call ahead for instructions, and consider having the attendees remain in their vehicles.
- At all graveside services, social distancing should be followed.

New guidance and information will be posted on the Department's COVID-19 website at <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>, as it becomes available.

If you have any questions, please contact the Bureau of Funeral Directing by telephone at 518-402-0785 or by email at funeral@health.ny.gov.

Sincerely,

Thomas W. Fuller, Director
Bureau of Funeral Directing