

CONSUMER HOW-TO

CHOOSE A FUNERAL DIRECTOR

Following is some of the information needed, either by the funeral home or others:

1. Full name and address of deceased
2. Date, place of birth and death
3. Names of parents, including maiden name of mother
4. Social Security Number
5. Name and address of spouse
6. Date and place of marriage
7. Names, addresses and phone numbers of children, brothers, sisters, and previous spouses.
8. Names and addresses of present and previous employers
9. If you are a veteran, a copy of the discharge paper (DD214)
10. Name of church and minister
11. Names of professional and fraternal organizations
12. List of schools where degrees were earned and when
13. Names of newspapers for obituary
14. Visitation instructions
15. Information about donations to be made to charitable organizations
16. Names of pallbearers
17. Names of songs for funeral service
18. Name, address and location of cemetery property

In most cases, arranging a funeral involves the following steps and choices:

1. Make the "first calls" to notify the appropriate parties and have the deceased removed from the place of death. It may be necessary to arrange transportation between cities.
2. Meet with a funeral director to make arrangements for the funeral services, including ceremonies and care of the deceased.
3. Select and purchase the necessary merchandise (e.g., casket, burial vault, urn, etc.) and memorial items (e.g., grave marker, online memorial).
4. Meet with officials of the selected cemetery to purchase interment property (e.g., grave plot, crypt, niche for an urn, etc.).
5. After the funeral, handle all financial, legal, and administrative matters. Before proceeding, be sure to determine if the deceased set forth specific instructions regarding these steps in a pre-arranged funeral plan.

Make "First Calls"

When someone dies various parties must be immediately notified, including:

- The attending physician, a coroner or medical examiner to officially pronounce the death. If the deceased was in a hospital or other care facility, this is typically arranged by the staff.
- Local law enforcement should be contacted first if the death was not attended or due to unknown circumstances.
- Family members or a legal representative of the deceased. They will need to locate the deceased's pre-arranged funeral plan, if one exists, for direction in how to proceed with funeral arrangements.
- A Funeral Director to transfer the body from the place of death to a funeral home or comparable care facility. Funeral directors are available through funeral homes and other funeral service organizations.

A pre-arranged funeral plan generally specifies the funeral service provider. If one hasn't been pre-selected, it's best to make the "first call" to the funeral home, cremation service or other service provider

that will handle all the funeral arrangements. This will avoid an additional transportation charge to subsequently have the deceased moved to another service provider.

Select Funeral Merchandise and Memorial Items

The necessary funeral merchandise and any desired memorials can be purchased from the funeral home, the cemetery or a specialty retailer. You are not required to buy these products from the funeral home or cemetery that is handling the funeral services. Your options include:

1. Casket
2. Outer burial container
3. Urn
4. Grave marker

Cemetery Arrangements

A cemetery is the place where the dead are buried or interred -- a "final resting place" for the deceased. A typical cemetery offers various types of grave spaces for earth burial and mausoleum crypts for entombment. Similar options are available for burial or entombment of cremated remains. The cemetery also provides services to open and close the grave or crypt and to install grave markers. Some cemeteries charge recurring fees for the perpetual maintenance of the grounds.

Since you are likely to visit the cemetery periodically to remember your loved one, location is an important consideration in selecting a cemetery. Many people purchase cemetery property in advance to relieve their survivors of this responsibility.

Does it have to be a religious service?

No. If organized religion is not a part of your life, you may have a secular or contemporary service. Family members, close friends or associates may conduct the service and share memories, poems and songs that would be meaningful. If you are not a member of any particular church, but would still like to have a minister conduct the service, Heller-Hoenstine Funeral Home can help arrange for a minister.