

### **I've never arranged a funeral before. What do I need to know?**

At some time in our lives, most of us will make or assist in making funeral arrangements. This will not be an easy time, but we offer these tips for smart planning:

- Be an informed consumer and ask questions
- Choose an independent funeral home and a licensed funeral director
- Discuss all service and payment options during the funeral arrangements
- Make sure you receive a copy of the funeral home's General Price List
- Be prepared and make decisions and organize details in advance of need
- Plan a personalized and meaningful ceremony to help you begin healing

### **Funeral & Burial Questions**

#### **What is the purpose of a funeral?**

Funerals provide family members and friends a caring, supportive environment in which to celebrate the life of a loved one. Funerals are the first step in the grieving process. Attending a funeral service provides many benefits including:

- Providing a social support system for the bereaved
- Helping the bereaved understand that death is part of life
- Integrating the bereaved back into the community
- Easing the transition to a new life after the death of a loved one
- Providing a safe haven for embracing and expressing pain
- Reaffirming one's relationship with the person who died
- Providing a time to say good-bye

It is possible to have a full funeral service even for those choosing cremation. The importance of a funeral service is to provide a social gathering to help the bereaved begin the healing process.

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#### **What do funeral directors do?**

Funeral directors are caregivers and administrators. Their responsibilities include making the arrangements for the transportation of the deceased, completing all necessary paperwork, and implementing the choices made by the family regarding the funeral and final disposition of the deceased.

Funeral directors listen, advise and support. They have experience assisting the bereaved in coping with death. Funeral directors are trained to answer questions about grief, recognize when a person is having difficulty coping, and recommend sources for professional help.

#### **What types of funeral services exist?**

Every family is unique, and not everyone wants to lay a loved one to rest in the same manner. Funeral practices are influenced by religious and cultural traditions, costs and personal preferences. These factors determine the dynamics of the funeral and ultimately how the life of the deceased is to be celebrated.

#### **Why have a public viewing?**

Viewing is part of many cultural and ethnic traditions. Many grief specialists believe that viewing aids the grief process by helping the bereaved recognize the reality of death. Viewing is encouraged for children as long as the process is explained and the activity voluntary.

### **Embalming Questions**

**What is the purpose of embalming?**

Embalming sanitizes and preserves the deceased, retards the decomposition process and enhances the appearance of someone altered by traumatic death or illness. Embalming makes it possible to lengthen the time between death and the final disposition, thus allowing family members time to arrange and participate in the type of service most comforting to them.

**Is embalming required by law?**

Most states, require embalming when there's a public viewing, death is caused by a reportable contagious disease or when a deceased is to be transported from one state to another by common carrier, or if final disposition is not to be made within a prescribed number of hours.

**Cremation Questions**

Is cremation a substitute for a funeral?

As more people are choosing cremation, funeral service professionals are striving to give consumers a true sense of what their many options are for a funeral service. In actuality, cremation is only part of the commemorative experience. Cremation can increase your options when planning a funeral. Cremation gives loved ones the flexibility to search for various types of tributes that reflect the life that's being honored. But this does not mean that aspects of traditional funeral services have to be discarded. Even with cremation, a meaningful memorial that is personalized to reflect the life of the deceased could include:

- A visitation prior to the service
- An open or closed casket
- A ceremony at the funeral chapel, your place of worship or other special location
- Participation by friends and family

Cremated remains are often placed in an urn and committed to an indoor or outdoor mausoleum or columbarium; interred in a family burial plot; or included in a special urn garden.