

Funeral Homes Guidance: July 18, 2021

Public Health measures (e.g. physical distancing) have been put in place to contain the spread of COVID-19 and to mitigate the societal and health system impacts of the disease. These measures affect funerals and burials as well as cemetery and crematorium operations, whether or not the death is related to COVID-19.

Regardless of the cause of death, death care providers should consider the use of virtual technologies (e.g. telephone, video conference, video recordings) in place of in-person services and gatherings. These technologies allow for broader inclusion and participation and are currently being practiced in many areas of the country.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing measures are approaches taken to minimize close contact with others in the community. These include quarantine and [self-isolation](#), avoiding common greeting practices like hugging and handshakes, avoiding crowds, cancelling public/mass gatherings, and implementing workplace measures and closures.

There are many practices funeral home directors can take to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to keep staff, families and visitors safe and healthy.

At the Funeral Home:

1. Abstain from hosting all public visitations;
2. For private visitations,
 1. immediate family may be visited by no more than fifty people at a time by invitation only, provided:
 1. measures are in place to maintain physical distance, and prevent mingling between the immediate family and other visitors and
 2. there are no more than 200 people in total over the span of the visitation (including the immediate family and people from other households),
 3. a funeral home staff person is on site to ensure that protocols are followed during the visitation, and
 4. all other measures in this guidance and applicable measures from the [Public Health Measures Guidance](#) are followed.
 2. For the purposes of the visitation, who is considered immediate family is at the discretion of the family and based on the capacity of the funeral home.
 3. Visitations should be scheduled in advance to minimize people mixing;
 4. After a private visitation exceeding no more than 200 people in total, additional separate visitations with the deceased may be scheduled, without the immediate family or others present, up to fifty people at a time, for individuals unable to be accommodated within the total of 200 for the visitation
3. Consider the use of alternatives to in-person signing of the guest book and taking memorials/donations, such as online mechanisms for people to offer condolences and give memorials/donations; where possible, avoid providing attendees with shared items; if required, ensure
 1. hand washing facilities or alcohol-based sanitizers are within easy reach,

2. signs are posted, to remind people to wash or sanitize their hands before touching a shared surface, and to maintain a two metre distance from individuals from other households,
 3. any high touch surfaces are frequently cleaned and disinfected, and
 4. where applicable, ensure congestion is minimized.
4. Funeral and/or memorial services can occur. Organized gatherings of up to 100 persons indoors and 200 persons outdoors are permitted to be held at an indoor or outdoor location provided businesses, services or organizations follow the [Public Health Measures Guidance](#) and an [operational plan](#) outlining measures to mitigate transmission of COVID-19 is in place and followed. Funeral services may include up to 200 people, plus officials, when held at a facility that has been approved for up to 200 people, with a maximum cohort of 100 indoor or 200 outdoors; up to two cohorts of 100 permitted indoors (to a maximum of 200 people) with a prior approval as per the [Public Health Measures Guidance](#).
 5. Funeral receptions of up to 100 people are permitted following the organized gathering guidance.
 6. People who have received an exemption from self-isolation for attending a wake, funeral or burial service must keep 6 feet or 2 metre distance from others and wear a non-medical mask. They are also expected to perform hand hygiene and practice cough etiquette, self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19, stay in self-isolation if experiencing symptoms, and follow other general public health measures. They must follow the [designated testing schedule](#), and have received a negative COVID-19 test in the 24 hours before any visitation, funeral or burial service. They must self-isolate, except when at the visitation, funeral or burial service, for their first 8 days in PEI (subject to a negative test on day 8) or the duration of their stay if shorter. This exemption does not apply if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. More information for these individuals on the self isolation exemption can be found [here](#).
 7. Set up your space to accommodate appropriate physical distancing of at least 2-meters or 6 feet from all individuals, at all times; numbers in a space should be limited to those that can be accommodated with physical distancing.
 8. Follow current [mask guidelines](#).
 9. Do not permit shaking hands, hugging, etc.;
 10. Encourage hand washing by making available alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with a minimum of 60% alcohol content) or access to washrooms that are always well stocked with liquid soap and paper towels;
 11. Have extra tissues on hand and a hands-free waste basket for disposal;
 12. Enhance cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs, table-tops, bathrooms and other surfaces.
 13. Everyone on arrival should be asked if they have any COVID-19 symptoms or are required to self isolate (or are exempt for the visitation/service).

At Burials and Cemeteries:

1. Organized gatherings of up to 100 persons indoors or 200 persons outdoors are permitted to be held at an indoor or outdoor location provided businesses, services or organizations follow the [Public Health Measures Guidance](#) and an [operational plan](#) outlining measures to mitigate transmission of COVID-19 is in place and followed. Burial services may include up to 200 people, plus officials; up to two cohorts of 100 permitted indoors with a prior approval as per the [Public Health Measures Guidance](#).
2. Do not permit shaking hands, hugging, etc.
3. Practice physical distancing of 2 metres/6 feet between individuals and/or households.

*At the discretion of cemetery operators, additional individuals in vehicles may be permitted at the cemetery, provided individuals do not exit their vehicle or gather as this may exceed the maximum outdoor gathering limit.