



Texas Funeral Service Commission Reopen Texas Recommendations for Funeral Practitioners during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Revision 06172020

In accordance with Governor Abbott's most recent Executive Order GA-26 and his Report to Re-open Texas, funeral services, burials and memorial services are included in the Minimum Standard Health Protocol for churches and places of worship.

These identified tasks will continue as previously outlined in the TFSC recommendations revised on April 6, 2020 and on May 4, 2020.

Transferring of remains – Same procedures as previously recommended

Preparation of remains – Same procedures as previously recommended

Funeral Arrangements Conference – Same procedures as previously recommended

There is no limitation to the number of people in the arrangement office; however, the funeral home should use their best judgment as to the room capacity and safe distancing.

Modified and Updated Recommendations

Viewing/Visitation – Same procedures as previously recommended

There is no occupancy limit or restrictions on a religious service conducted in a church or place of worship, which includes a funeral or memorial service conducted in a church, place of worship or the funeral home or mortuary chapel. Therefore, there is not a limit to the number of people attending the viewing/visitation or evening service. The funeral staff should be attentive to open doors and assist with the visitation activities and the movement of the guests throughout the facility. After the end of the visitation, the room should be properly disinfected to ensure the cleanliness of the facility for the next day's funeral activities.

The other recommendations in regards to an ID viewing for direct cremation /immediate burial are to remain the same as previous TFSC recommendations.

Funeral Service Activities – Same procedures as previously recommended

There is no occupancy limit or restrictions on a religious service conducted in a church or place of worship, which includes a funeral or memorial service conducted in a church, place of worship or the funeral home or mortuary chapel. Therefore, there is not a limit to the number of people attending the funeral or memorial service. The areas where the public has interacted should be disinfected in between each service. Each funeral home should also use their best judgment as to the total number of people in the funeral home at any given time; this does not include any funeral home staff members.

Out of respect for those individuals at high-risk of infection, a special designated area should be made available for them. This area needs to be disinfected prior to and after each use. It should be reserved only to those who are high risk and their immediate family members.

It is a recommendation that the live streaming accommodations continue to be used during this continued Reopening since there may be high risk guests who cannot attend the services yet have the ability to participate remotely.

Interment Services

Outdoor interment services no longer have a limitation as to the number of people who gather at the interment site. There are no longer any restrictions or requirements that mandate social distancing at an outdoor interment location.

Additional Recommendations

There is no facial covering requirement for the guests or public visitors; however, each funeral home may require their staff to have some type of facial covering. Each funeral establishment can require customers to follow additional hygiene measures when entering their facilities. As a reminder, all funeral home staff is encouraged to practice proper cleanliness and good personal hygiene when working at the funeral home and especially when working with the guests and public.

If a funeral home is offering a reception or repass for the family after the service, remember to follow the restaurant rules for seating capacity and food service health and safety items. When conducting a funeral type of service, funeral establishments' fall under the place of worship category but when funeral establishments are catering or hosting reception type of events, they fall under the restaurant venue health and safety recommendations. I encourage every funeral establishment to review their current COVID-19 response so that you are providing professional funeral service in a safe and healthy manner yet not prohibiting the necessary grieving opportunities that your families need.

The Texas Funeral Service Commission does not have the legal authority to penalize any facility that does not adhere to these recommendations. Each funeral establishment may have stricter health and safety practices than the Governor's guidelines for Reopening Texas. The Commission fully supports the Governor's health recommendations and each funeral establishment's guidelines as long as they remain compliant with the Commission's rules and regulations.

In the upcoming months as our state reopens completely, there will be an increased demand for memorial services for those who have died during the state stay home stay safe restrictions. As funeral professionals, we need to be cognizant of the:

- Physical requirements necessary to schedule a number of memorial services alongside your current funeral home schedule. This could mean a doubling of services (chapel space and funeral home staff) during particular times, such as weekends, in order to meet the funeral needs of all your families.
- Emotional requirements of those families who decided to have immediate disposition of their loved one during the pandemic. Just as your current families are experiencing the pain and sorrow of grief, those families who were not allowed to have any type of funeral service may be experiencing compounded grief due to the lapsed time from their loved ones death until the time they can ultimately plan and attend a memorialization event.
- Financial constraints of the families whom you serve. Many families do not have the financial resources to support two funeral events, separated by time, due to a health crisis, which they had no control over. When a family, whom you previously served, comes to your funeral home to plan a memorial service or event, consider their physical requests

for a memorial service, their emotional condition for having to wait an unexpected length of time to have a proper memorial event and lastly consider their financial situation and how the pandemic may have placed a heavier burden on them.

I strongly encourage every funeral home to reach out to those families whom you have served during this health crisis to start the planning process for the anticipated increase of memorialization. We are the funeral professionals and it is our fiduciary responsibility to the community to be ready to meet their physical, emotional and financial needs as they plan and execute much needed funeral services.

Over the next few months, the Texas Funeral Service Commission will continue to update funeral practitioners in Texas as to the best recommendations for providing funeral services in a safe and healthy manner. Remember, use best judgment when planning funeral services to ensure the health and safety of the funeral home guests, public visitors and the participating staff members. These recommendations should continue to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Professionally,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light pink background, reading "Glenn Bower".

Glenn A. Bower, CFSP

Executive Director

Texas Funeral Service Commission

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