Guidance for Funerals and Memorial Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This guidance is intended for operators and attendees of funerals and memorial services and is based on known evidence as of August 17, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preamble</td>
<td>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had to keep our distance from others. We have also had to limit the number of people who can get together. This has made it difficult to come together in-person to grieve.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Funerals and memorial services for someone who has died can happen in a safe way.</strong> You can use the following guidance organize and safely hold a funeral or memorial service.</td>
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<td>Remember: the things we need to do to keep people safe are not forever, but they are very important for now, to protect everyone’s health. There will be a time when we can all come together again.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizing a Funeral or Memorial Service</td>
<td>There are some simple things that people can do to plan a funeral or memorial service during the COVID-19 pandemic.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Make sure anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or who needs to self-isolate stays home</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Anyone who feels sick should stay home. If you think you have symptoms of COVID-19, use the Ministry of Health’s online self-assessment tool at covid19.thrive.health or call 8-1-1 to determine if you need further assessment for COVID-19 testing by a health-care provider or at a local collection centre. Read more about what to do if you feel sick here. Anyone who has travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days needs to stay home and self-isolate for two weeks.</td>
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<td><strong>Include people who cannot attend the funeral or memorial service</strong></td>
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<td>Think about people who cannot come to the event, such as people who are sick, people who live in another city, people who are quarantined, or people who are at higher risk of complications of COVID-19. Consider streaming the service online so...</td>
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that these people can take part. Some people may want to wait until the pandemic is over to hold a funeral or memorial service so that there is no limit to the number of people who can come and no risk of infection.

**Plan to have the funeral or memorial service in a large, open space**

Try to have the event outdoors if you can, with lots of fresh air and space for people to keep their distance from each other. If you have to have the event indoors, try to find the largest space you can, open doors and windows for better air circulation.

**Make sure that no more than 50 people come together at once**

The larger the group is, the higher the risk is for COVID-19 to spread. This is why events cannot have more than 50 people at once. This number includes everyone except for staff who work at the site. Whether the event is 50 people or 15 people, try to keep your physical distance from others who are not in your household. It is easy to forget guidance when surrounded by people you know and love, especially in a situation like a funeral or memorial service. Nods and waves are ways you can greet others and offer support.

If you want to hold several events, think about scheduling people to attend the events at different times. Remember the maximum number in each group is 50 people. It is especially important for family members who attend multiple events to maintain physical distance or wear a non-medical mask. There should be no overlaps between attendees except for family members who need to attend multiple events. Ask people to wait inside their vehicles prior to events and not gather in the parking lot outside of their cars.

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<th>At the Funeral or Memorial Service</th>
<th>Keep things clean</th>
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<tr>
<td>Before and after the service, wipe down surfaces that are touched by a lot of people, such as door knobs, light switches, cupboard handles, and tables. Use a product that is effective at killing viruses. Information on how to clean and disinfect surfaces is available <a href="#">here</a>.</td>
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<td>Make sure there are places where people can clean their hands and dispose of used tissues</td>
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| Put hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol at the entry and exit, near the casket, and near any food services. Make sure that washrooms have soap and running water to wash hands and paper towels or hand dryers to dry hands. Encourage people who visit to clean their hands: • When they arrive • Before they touch their face • Before they eat • After they touch things like the casket, used tissues, or doorknobs, and • After they use the washroom. A poster with instructions on how to clean hands properly is available [here](#). | Put hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol at the entry and exit, near the casket, and near any food services. Make sure that washrooms have soap and running water to wash hands and paper towels or hand dryers to dry hands. Encourage people who visit to clean their hands:
  • When they arrive
  • Before they touch their face
  • Before they eat
  • After they touch things like the casket, used tissues, or doorknobs, and
  • After they use the washroom. A poster with instructions on how to clean hands properly is available [here](#). |
Wearing Masks
People who want to wear masks need to remember that they still need to wash their hands regularly and keep their distance from others. There are instructions on how to wear masks on the BCCDC website.

Viewing and Touching the Body
Family and friends can view the body of the person who died after it has been prepared for burial or cremation. It is safe to touch the body, whether the person died from COVID-19 or from another cause. Make sure you clean your hands afterwards.

Singing and Choirs
Singing is a very important activity for many people. Although it is a higher risk activity, there are ways to make singing safer:

- For people who are well enough to attend services, stay two metres apart.
- Try to be outdoors wherever possible.
- If it is held indoors, open windows or doors to help ventilate the room. Limit the number of people who are singing and limit the time spent singing.
- Consider breaking into smaller groups that sing together for shorter periods of time.
- Consider having a soloist or a small group of singers perform for the audience.
- Try humming along to recorded music or along with a soloist or small group of singers.
- Do not share microphones, music stands, or other equipment.

Children can play together safely
Children who attend the funeral or memorial service may want to play with other children. This is safe as long as they wash their hands before and after they play, and the time spent playing is shorter rather than longer. Try to have children play outside with supervision. Try to have children play with others who are in their bubble or usual playgroup.

Food and drinks can be served
Food and drinks can be served safely. People can serve their own food if they are able to wash their hands before they touch food or utensils. You can also have one person serve others. Wipe down and clean things that are shared, like utensils and condiments.

Pallbearing
Pallbearers should wear masks because they are close to each other in pallbearing, and wash their hands afterwards.

Help Public Health
Write down the name and phone number of people who attend the funeral or...
memorial service event(s). This will help public health with contact tracing should an attendee be found to have COVID-19 and others are exposed. One person could do this, or visitors could sign a sheet or submit information online. Make sure there is hand sanitizer available so people can clean their hands if using a shared pen.