Essential Basics- the Funeral Cost- Comparison Survey

The most important function of the FCA is providing information to consumers. An ***unbiased*** funeral home price survey provides vital information to consumers. Price surveys should represent all the funeral homes in your area, not only the prices of cooperating funeral homes. The efforts we make to collect and compile these prices can easily save our community members thousands of dollars.

Hospices and hospitals are thrilled to have these surveys. They empower social workers and chaplains with information to guide families through a difficult time. These community contacts help spread your message and are potential sources of volunteers, donations and/ or grants.

1. **Decide on a Geographic Area**

Considerations:

Start small and grow over time.

Size of survey area. Surveys are most valuable in competitive markets. Rural surveys may not be the wisest use of organizations resources.

Volunteers will be needed to collect GPLs in person.

1. **Create Survey template**

Compile list of funeral homes – Obtain list from the state funeral board or search online “funeral homes”, yellow pages; also use list to track collections

Search for online GPLs- \* note online GPL on survey

List Direct cremation prices, immediate burial prices and cost of a full- service funeral. Also publish a survey of all the itemized prices of a full service funeral.

User friendly: Organize by county, city or geographic areas

Readability: Break down into several layouts with different information

Consider including average prices for each service; % change in prices over time.

Note those owned by corporations i.e. SCI and Signature

Prepare an intro for users; how unbiased survey was conducted; define direct cremation, immediate burial and full service funeral, inform that the FTC Funeral Rule gives them the right to select only what they want and how they can control costs by adding or deleting optional services such as embalming, or a graveside service.

* Instructions for Completing a Funeral Home Price Survey Grid<https://funerals.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/How-to-Fill-in-a-Funeral-Price-Survey-Grid-1-of-2.pdf>

1. **Decide how to collect General Price Lists**

IMPORTANT - the Federal Trade Commission’s Funeral Rule requires funeral homes to hand you a printed price list if you show up at the funeral home to discuss funeral arrangements. There are no exceptions, you don’t have to be planning an imminent funeral, and they may not refuse to give it to you for any reason.

BUT - Funeral homes are not required to mail, fax, or email price lists to you.

Anticipate resistance from funeral homes- establish relationship “Why are you doing this to us?”

1. Send a letter requesting voluntary participation in the group’s price survey. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope also provide your email for responses. The letter should explain your affiliation with national FCA, the purpose of the survey and how it will be used and distributed. Notify that you will send a volunteer to collect a GPL if they do not respond.

Always offer to mail the funeral home a completed copy of the survey as a thank-you for participating. Welcome feedback from funeral homes. Your survey may contain a clerical error or it may be an opportunity to discuss a poorly written GPL.

1. Email a reminder to send their GPL.
2. Phone calls; request voluntary compliance; notify them a volunteer will collect.
3. Organize and dispatch volunteers

Any funeral home that refuses an in-person request for a price list should be reminded they’re violating the FTC Funeral Rule and that you will report them to the FTC and the state funeral board. Note on your survey - “REFUSED TO GIVE PRICES IN VIOLATION OF FEDERAL RULES”

1. **Compiling Data**
2. Plan for storing/ sharing GPLs and input data for final survey- physical copies, digital files on google drive or other sharable format
3. Survey input sheet for results of interpretation

Considerations: Which service prices will you collect; those on the survey - additional prices for statistical purposes; note compliance with FTC regulations

1. Single input form for each funeral home listing; see FCA-GKC example
2. Spreadsheet; see file- “How to Fill in a Funeral Home Price Survey Spreadsheet - 3of 3
3. Interpretation of GPLs
4. Review GPL interpretation resources on website
5. GPLs are often initially difficult to interpret. Some are not in compliance with FTC guidelines.
6. When you have questions you’re encouraged to call Josh Slocum any time, as many times as you need to, for help and consultation — **802-865-8300**, or email **josh@funerals.org**.

Complying with the Funeral Rule — a guide from the FTC <https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/plain-language/565a-complying-with-funeral-rule_2020_march_508.pdf>

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The Funeral Director’s Guide to Consumer-Friendly GPLS

<https://funerals.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/gplguide.pdf>

GPLs Demystified

<https://funerals.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/GPLsDemystified.pdf>

Releasing the Survey

Goals

1. Distribute survey results to members and consumers- target hospices, hospitals, community centers, retirement communities, social services agencies, etc. Get your survey into the hands of point of need care providers; social workers and chaplains.
2. Raise public awareness of your organization. Reach potential new members, new volunteers and new donors. Establish relationships with community service organizations and local businesses.

Newsletter promotion- Mail to all organizations that may care about your mission.

In person visits to target organizations

Press release/ coverage

Annual meeting

**Guidebook for Running a Funeral Consumers Alliance 1 of 2–**

**Chapter 3: Working with the Funeral Industry**

<https://funerals.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/1-of-2-final-guidebook-for-running-fca-7.25.2014.pdf>

**Funeral Home Price Survey Resources**

<https://funerals.org/resources/funeral-price-survey-instructions-and-help/>