

Dedicated to protecting a consumer's right to choose a meaningful, dignified, and affordable funeral

Things funereal in a time of pandemic: keeping perspective

Fear is running high for everyone right now, obviously. In this line of work, we know that one of the first places people's minds go when a pandemic strikes is a place of fear about death and dead bodies. The media, particularly television, stokes this fear. Americans are seeing images that frighten them—refrigerated morgue trucks, burials of the unclaimed dead in New York City.

We understand the fear. But we also know that death-dead-body-related fears are generated not by situations that are actually harmful, or that present a danger to us. It's a case of "anxiety theater" that discomposes people for no good reason except to keep our eyeballs glued to an advertiser-funded medium.

We want to help separate funeral facts from fear. We have two articles and a video, so far, that we hope you'll find helpful. These are for everyone; for those of you who are FCA insiders who run local organizations, and for

those of you who are our members and supporters from the community. You make this possible; *thank you*.

We can only excerpt these in a printed newsletter, but you'll find the complete resources at the links provided. Be sure to visit our website for these, as the articles link to practical advice and publications with "evergreen" tips that will always work to simplify arrangements and save money.

Funerals postponed

The Covid19 pandemic is affecting our lives and our deaths. Families are having to make choices about funerals they haven't faced before. Everyday more state and federal officials suggest (or mandate) that we refrain from gathering in groups of more than 10 (though this advice has probably changed even as you read this).

This is going to be difficult, but it is

continued next page

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Tell the FTC

It's time to mandate online funeral prices

PAGE 3

Have You Seen our Toolbox?

FCA Affiliate templates and resources

PAGE 3

Pandemic Problems

You can help solve them

PAGE 4

Conference 2020 Postponed!

Our biennial conference that was to be held this June in Austin, Texas, has been postponed.

Yes, we have a new date: September 24-27, 2020. We also have a request: keep checking back with us? It is possible that the conference will be cancelled this year and moved to 2021. It is also possible that we will hold it online.

We wish we could give you a definite date and answer. Like you, we're taking account of changing and unpredictable circumstances.

As always, the latest updates will be posted as soon as we know them at funerals.org.

Thank you!

The FCA Newsletter

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Joshua Slocum, editor

Published by:
Funeral Consumers Alliance

33 Patchen Road
South Burlington, VT
05403

802-865-8300

FAX:
802-865-2626

Email:
fca@funerals.org

Website:
www.funerals.org

continued from page one

not impossible, and it is important to keep a sense of perspective, especially when the emotions of a death in the family take hold. Many American families have already moved away from large-group funerals for years simply because they're too costly for a growing number of households.

This doesn't mean we can't grieve. It doesn't mean we can't honor the memory of someone we loved. It doesn't mean that we can't connect and commune with our families and friends. Yes, it does mean we aren't going to have the solace of that in-person hug, and the meal afterward, and that's the hardest part.

But here are some things we can do. Some of these choices have already become common or even traditional in some areas:

Remember that the physical disposition of the body doesn't control how we grieve and mend our wounds. Choosing simple services without in-person gatherings and ceremonies, such as direct cremation and immediate burial, will get the body where it needs to go.

For the rest of this article, visit funerals.org--->news/blog---> 'Funerals postponed'

Covid19 and the dead: facts, not fear

When a disaster or a pandemic occurs,

people are understandably fearful. But humans are prone to amplifying our fears beyond reality, and one of the first places the human mind goes when in a state of fear is to thoughts of death and dead bodies.

Let's separate fear from fact.

Q: Will I catch Covid19 from a dead body?

A: This is very unlikely compared to the objective risk to us from those living with the illness.

What do the experts say? The CDC says this:

"There is currently no known risk associated with being in the same room at a funeral or visitation service with the body of someone who died of COVID-19."

For the rest of this article, visit funerals.org--->news/blog---> 'Covid19 and the dead: facts, not fear'



Do you like to get your information from videos? We're building a collection of short instructional videos, and our latest blends the topics in the articles listed above. If you like them, please share online!

Just go to **youtube.com** and search for Funeral Consumers Alliance; you'll find our channel and playlist.

Your generosity at work for real people, solving real problems

There's a reason we ask our friends like you to make gifts to save a family from funeral poverty, or to bring a price survey to Brooklyn. It's because that's what you're actually doing. Yes, we know that you make a check out to us, not to John and Sally in Anytown.

But we are your staff; we are not the people you're trying to help directly. It's our job to take your generous gifts and turn them into the practical solutions for real people the way you intend.

Here's a selection of what your gifts have accomplished this spring—thank you!

Laid to rest at home

Kathleen from Tucson wrote us for help figuring out how to do a home

burial; whole-body burial on the home property, not at a cemetery. We showed her where to look for relevant regulations, and gave some tips on what to expect from zoning officials. Kathleen was kind enough to tell us she was able to have a home burial.

"You were so kind to call me and talk. My wife, Joanna, died soon thereafter and I had everything ready thanks to you."

Affordable send-offs in New York City

A long-time friend of our mission alerted us that a hospital in Brooklyn had an overflowing morgue. The families of these deceased patients were poor, and the hospital staff were overwhelmed with the sick and unsure

how to help.

Thanks to you, our constant supporters, we were able to do a quick price survey of direct cremation and burial options for this hospital. We included a tip sheet for staff and families about their legal rights making arrangements, what price range was reasonable, and some pitfalls to avoid when making last-minute arrangements for an unexpected death.

Your financial support is what puts these materials in the hands of grieving people every day. We, and they, are fortunate that you do.

Thank you!

Tell the Federal Trade Commission how to better protect grieving Americans

—DEADLINE June 15, 2020

As you know, the Federal Trade Commission is collecting comments from the public about the Funeral Rule. The Rule, in place since 1984, gives consumers important rights, including the right to buy only what they want, item by item, the right to decline embalming, and the right to receive printed, complete prices before finalizing arrangements. There are other rights in the Rule, but these are the most important.

The FTC is collecting comments because it's considering whether to update the 36-year-old Rule. Funeral Consumers Alliance along with Consumer Federation of America have led the campaign to convince the FTC to force funeral homes to put their complete price lists online.

The pandemic has made this artificial information-bottling even more obvious. It's past time for the government to compel funeral homes to join the 21st century. Even in normal times, families with no handicaps or obstacles can't effectively shop for funeral costs by driving all over town in the days after a death in order to compare prices. People with mobility problems, too, are stuck without complete information during "normal" times, too.

You can help! The new deadline to submit comments is **June 15, 2020**. Hundreds of FCA members already have—thank you!

How? We hope you will log on and tell the FTC:

- Funeral homes should have to put their price lists online
- Funeral homes should be required to disclose all fees when selling cremation in a conspicuous, easy-to-see way
- The FTC should launch a complete investigation of the cemetery sector for possible inclusion under the Funeral Rule

How? The easiest way to find the right place to comment:

- Go to **regulations.gov**
- Then, type "funeral rule" into the search box
- Then click on the one that says "Funeral Industry Practices Rule." You will also notice a "comment now" button.

What will happen then? The FTC will likely take about six months to decide whether to look at specific amendments to the Rule. That's why your comment now matters. This is not a foregone conclusion; we need you to help persuade the Commission to take that next step, so comment today!

If the Commission does decide to amend the Rule, it will begin working on specific changes. There will be a period in which we, and industry, can comment on those changes and offer feedback.

Then, the FTC will publish a revised Rule, which will take effect at some point in the near-future relative to the publication of the revised Rule. Expect this entire process to take at least one and one-half years.

As of this writing, 545 people and organizations have submitted comments. Yours can be next!

Are you a local leader of an FCA group? This is FOR YOU!

Affiliate Resources

Funeral Consumers Alliance consists of affiliate groups representing regions throughout the country. These groups exist to serve their communities through education, advocacy, and by acting as a watchdog over the funeral and cemetery industries.

This section offers practical information and guidance on forming and running a local affiliate group. Click each category below to explore our comprehensive directory of affiliate resources.

- ▶ Archived Grim Readers
- ▶ Archived Newsletters
- ▶ Educational Presentations

That screenshot above is just a sample to show you what our **Resources** section looks like. There's much more than we can show.

If you're looking for a solution to a problem in your FCA, chances are it's already answered in our materials. You just may not know about it!

Are you looking to. . .

—Revise your bylaws? See our template in '**Guidebook for Running a Funeral Consumers Alliance**'.

—Complete a price survey? You'll want our step-by-step instructions and template spreadsheet. It's in the **Guidebook**.

—Print or adapt consumer brochures on funeral topics? Our whole range, laid out in tri-fold format, .pdf, is ready for you to download. Yes, this is where you find updates, too.

—Push for regulatory change in your state? See our **Lobbying** materials.

—Learn about industry trends that affect consumers? You'll want to look at our **Policy Papers and Research** collection.

Go to **funerals.org**, then click on "**Resources**". If you don't have to reinvent the wheel, why go to the trouble?

Funeral planning is hard enough in ordinary times. These are not ordinary times, and YOU can help

We tell you about the people who call us every day looking for someone to help them figure out a final send-off. Most families who call need help finding an arrangement they can afford.

Lately? A lot of people are calling for help to find an arrangement at all.

“My mother has been in the morgue since April 2, and the hospital needs me to get her out. I have to put an end to this. There’s a limit to what I can take.”

“37,” Jennifer said. “That’s how many funeral homes I’ve called. None of them have space. My mother has been in the morgue since April 2, and the hospital needs me to get her out. I have to put an end to this. There’s a limit to what I can take.”

Jennifer called from New York City, the hardest-hit part of the country. Oh, no, she’s not the only who’s called. And it’s not just family members. It’s hospital staff. From Boston, New York City, Providence, and others.

What do they do with an overflowing morgue? What can they tell patient families who lost a family member in complete shock, never expecting their daughter to die in her 40s during a once-in-our-lives pandemic?

They need your help. We need your help, because when you write a check it’s only nominally “to us” at FCA. It’s really for Jennifer who needs help finding a funeral home. It’s for Linda at the hospital’s decedent affairs office which has never has never faced such a situation before.

Will you help solve this problem for one family, for two? Will you help ease the strain at a hospital with tips on quick, on-the-fly funeral advice for families who have never heard of direct burial or cremation before?

That’s exactly what your gift will do. We’ve costed it out. These are real figures, not gimmicks. Advocating for families and professionals costs money, and we can measure how much it costs and the good you can do, dollar for dollar.

- For \$50, you can pay for the phone counseling required to help the average grieving family figure out a solution.
- For \$200 you’ll pay for a simplified cremation and burial cost survey that we’ll put directly in the hands of an overwhelmed hospital, along with tips for patient families on what services are available, what they ought to cost, and what to watch out for.

Your gift will do this good work.

Please make a gift right now using the enclosed reply card to help at least one family avoid funeral poverty!

Or, go online:

www.funerals.org/donate