



TFSC COVID-19 Response

The TFSC has issued a revised funeral protocol in support of Governor Abbott's Executive Order GA-18. The revised funeral protocol is effective Monday, May 4, 2020. It can be found on the TFSC website. Please download both COVID-19 Responses (dated April 6, 2020 and May 4, 2020). We have included as much information as possible to help you safely navigate this current health crisis. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to call or email the office and we will return your inquiry promptly.

Glenn Bower, CFSP

Executive Director

In accordance with Governor Abbott's Executive Order GA-18 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. As a reminder, all funeral home staff is encouraged to practice proper cleanliness, good personal hygiene and safe distancing when working at the funeral home and especially when working with the guests and public. 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. The Texas Funeral Service Commission does not have the legal authority to penalize any facility that does not adhere to these recommendations except that this is the guidance of the Governor's office and the Commission fully supports these guidelines.

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

Transferring of remains – Same procedures as previously recommended

Preparation of remains – Same procedures as previously recommended

Modified and Updated Recommendations

Funeral Arrangements Conference

After each family has made funeral arrangements, the arrangements office, the merchandise selection room and any other location where the family may have interacted needs to be disinfected appropriately. Funeral home staff members should be assisting guests with their movement around the funeral home in order to minimize the potential spread of COVID-19. 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.

Viewing/Visitation

As with the funeral arrangements conference, it is recommended that the visitation be located in a room or facility that can best accommodate the attending guests with a safe distance between family groups. 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. In compliance with the Governor's Executive Order (GA-18) there is not a limit to the number of people attending the viewing/visitation or evening service. However, there needs to be safe distancing (6 feet) between family units and the guests need to be seated in every other pew. If at any time, a person who is designated as a high risk individual attends the viewing, a special designated area needs to be available for them. This area needs to be disinfected prior to and after each use. It also needs to be restricted only to those who are high risk and their immediate family members.

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

All funeral homes should follow the recommended safe seat spacing guideline of 6 feet between family groups and guests will be seated in every other row in the chapel or place of service. The funeral home 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; including guests and staff. If at any time, a person who is designated as a high risk individual attends the viewing, a special designated area needs to be available for them. This area needs to be disinfected prior to and after each use. It also needs to be restricted 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 Reopening phase since there may be high risk guests who cannot attend the services yet have the ability to participate remotely.

Interment Services

As previously stated, the burial or interment services are included in the Minimum Standard Health Protocol for churches and place of worship provided in the Governor's Executive Order GA-18. If there will be family setting at the place of interment, the chairs need to be set in such a manner that there is safe distancing between family units. There is no limitation as to the number of people who can attend the service, as long as safe distancing is practiced.

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.