

Frequently Asked Questions

Funerals and COVID-19

COVID-19 (coronavirus) is a highly infectious respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that spreads from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available.

- Call the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 (1-800-846-8517 TTY).
- Connect with a trained counselor through the Ohio Crisis Text Line by texting the keyword “4HOPE” to 741 741.
- Call the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services help line at 1-877-275-6364 to find resources in your community.

Am I at risk if I attend a funeral?

If you attend a funeral, please follow COVID-19 social distancing procedures. Social distancing means keeping the physical space between each person to at least 6 feet. Social distancing helps to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. **Avoid close contact with others including hugging, kissing and touching hands.** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If you don't have soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Cover coughs and sneezes with your arm or inner elbow – NOT your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Stay home if you are sick.

Am I at risk if I go to a funeral or visitation service for someone who died of COVID-19?

There is currently no known risk associated with funeral or visitation services of someone who died of COVID-19.

Am I at risk if I touch someone who died of COVID-19 after they have passed away?

The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. This type of spread is not a concern after death.

People should consider not touching the body of someone who has died of COVID-19. There may be less of a chance of the virus spreading from certain types of touching, such as holding the hand or hugging after the body has been prepared for viewing. Activities, such as kissing, washing and shrouding should be avoided before, during and after the body has been prepared, if possible.

If washing or shrouding the body are important religious or cultural practices, families are encouraged to work with their cultural and religious leaders and funeral home staff to reduce the risk of infection. At a minimum, people conducting these activities should wear disposable gloves. If splashing of fluids is expected, additional personal protective equipment (PPE) such as a disposable gown, face shield or goggles and N-95 respirator may be required.

Cleaning should be conducted in accordance with manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time). After removal of PPE, perform hand hygiene by washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Soap and water should be used if the hands are visibly soiled.

What should I do if my family member died from COVID-19 while overseas?

When a U.S. citizen dies outside the United States, the deceased person's next of kin or legal representative should notify U.S. consular officials at the Department of State. Consular personnel are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to provide assistance to U.S. citizens for overseas emergencies. If a family member, domestic partner or legal representative is in a different country from the deceased person, he or she should call the

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Department of State's Office of Overseas Citizens Services in Washington, DC, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday, at 888-407-4747 (toll-free) or 202-501-4444. For emergency assistance after working hours or on weekends and holidays, call the Department of State switchboard at 202-647-4000 and ask to speak with the Overseas Citizens Services duty officer. In addition, the U.S. embassy closest to or in the country where the U.S. citizen died can provide assistance.

My family member died from COVID-19 while overseas. What are the requirements for returning the body to the United States?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not require an autopsy before the remains of a person who died overseas are returned to the United States. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the death, some countries may require an autopsy. Sources of support to the family include the local consulate or embassy, travel insurance provider, tour operator, faith-based and aid organizations, and the decedent's employer. There likely will need to be an official identification of the body and official documents issued by the consular office.

CDC requirements for importing human remains depend upon if the body has been embalmed or cremated, or if the person died from a communicable disease that requires quarantine.