



COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

Updated March 20, 2020

Q: Who do I contact to inquire about getting PPE?

A: The DOH advises you to contact your local health department if you need PPE supplies

Q: Can I obtain electronic signatures on documents instead of originals?

A: The state law requires all health-related documents to have original signatures. Electronic/digital signatures are not permitted. We have sought a temporary exemption from the NYS Office of Information Technology for this requirement and will update the membership once we have an answer. Until then, our advice is to follow the law and obtain original signatures

Q: How do I enforce the 50 people or less mandate during visitations?

A: There are several options to consider based on your funeral home layout, staffing and anticipated number of mourners (under normal circumstances). The options include: maintaining a head count (i.e. use a clicker) as individuals enter and exit the funeral home; staggering services (if you have the capacity to hold multiple at the same time) so only one service takes place at a time; speak with the family ahead of time to revise the services to a smaller number/family only/private service.

Q: Is there any conversation about families who change their services due to COVID-19 and have irrevocable trusts? The services will most likely be limited, what are the options regarding these funds? Do they have to be turned over to the county?

A: Medicaid has not changed their regulations regarding the surrender of excess funds that we are aware of. The funeral home should check with their county if such a situation arises. We have a call in to Medicaid to confirm and will update the FAQ once we have confirmed with Medicaid.

Q: How will PrePlan handle the release of funds if registrars are not issuing certified death certificates? Will a permit work?

A: In the event of the inability to obtain a certified death certificate due to the pandemic, PrePlan will institute procedures to allow for submission of EDRS generated working copies of death certificates when submitting a claim. PrePlan will require certified copies of death certificates on these claims once normal operating procedures are restored. We cannot accept burial permits because they do not contain essential information, such as SS# or D.O.B., that PrePlan needs to validate claims.

Q: Shipping remains internationally – Where the letter of no communicable disease is required for shipping, what is the DOH's position?

A: The letter regarding communicable diseases is issued by the County and is required by the consulate of the receiving country. We haven't heard of any country suspending that requirement and I would expect the few countries that don't currently require it may start to.

Q: Dutchess County said no gatherings over 20, NYS says nothing over 50. Who has authority?

A: During his March 17th update, Governor Cuomo stated that no local government can create its own rules unless it has received approval from the NYS Department of Health

Q: Where do Funeral Directors go to obtain the death certificate transcript if registrars are closed?

A: According to State Vital Records, that is up to each individualized registration district. EDRS allows them to register records remotely, but in terms of being in their office and issuing transcripts or copies, that is up to each district office. One of the factors will be how large the office is, as registration and town officials try to practice social distancing. The filing and registering of death certificates are essential, but the necessity of issuance will probably be on a case by case basis. Funeral directors will continue to have the ability to print working copies of the death certificate.

Q: What if the next of kin is quarantined, who will sign the cremation authorization? Can it be signed electronically?

A: The Division of Cemeteries (DOC) would rule on whether the crematory could accept an electronic form and even whether one can be used. Note that electronic signatures are not currently allowed in law so permitting electronic signatures would require a statutory change or emergency action by the Governor. We have a request in to DOC for clarification/direction and will update the FAQ once additional information is received.