



NORTH CAROLINA BOARD OF FUNERAL SERVICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Spread of Coronavirus Impacts NC Funeral Homes NC Board of Funeral Service Issues Guidance to Funeral Licensees

As the coronavirus and the COVID-19 infection continues to spread across North Carolina, funeral homes and funeral service providers in the state are increasingly faced with questions and concerns from families regarding funeral services, visitations and other events to memorialize the death of loved ones. In response, the NC Board of Funeral Service has provided information to funeral professionals and consumers through the Board website at www.ncbfs.org/coronavirusadvisory to include links to the Centers for Disease Control, the NC Office of the Governor, and the NC Department of Health and Human Services for updates on the virus' impact on funeral professionals.

The Board is also sending targeted emails to funeral practitioners across the state regarding restrictions on funerals and related activities and events in response to the Executive Order that Governor Roy Cooper issued Saturday, March 14, 2020. Among its provisions is a restriction on public gatherings in the same room at the same time of more than 100 people which affects funeral services and events.

The NC Board of Funeral Service recognizes the significance of honoring the deceased but encourages families to consider the risks associated with potential exposure to the coronavirus in large gatherings. Board President Mark Blake said that "our profession is steadfast in its commitment to the traditions and expectations that honor the deceased, and they deserve our utmost respect along with our heartfelt compassion for families who grieve their loss."

Blake said that the current crisis brought on by the coronavirus reminds funeral directors to "exhibit the care and compassion that we always have in helping a family plan a funeral service. But we also have to assure the safety and health of those who want to attend a memorial service, a funeral, or a burial as well as our funeral service professionals and their employees who are involved in carrying out a service."

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He noted that funeral directors and others associated with professional funeral service in North Carolina would certainly comply with the Executive Order but acknowledged that its restrictions “would be difficult for many families who find the funeral and committal services an important source of comfort and reassurance.”

Board staff continue to monitor updates and other information from both federal and state sources in keeping funeral professionals up to date on developments and other impacts.

Executive Director Stephen Davis announced earlier today that the Board office will be closed to the public through the end of the month but that Board operations will continue without interruption.

Davis said that “we have placed a drop box outside the office entrance to enable hand-delivery of time-sensitive documents and reports.” He noted that staff will be working on staggered hours to minimize personal contact with each other in combination with telecommuting to help contain the spread of the virus.

Davis said that “Board members receive regular briefings and updates regarding the virus and are closely monitoring the impact on funeral homes and funeral professionals throughout the state.” He said that the Board would rely upon partnerships with the NC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, the NC Medical Board, and the NC Division of Public Health in addressing concerns and effects associated with the progressive spread of the virus throughout North Carolina.

In receiving decedents with COVID-19 as the cause of death, funeral practitioners in North Carolina are aware of key protocols in dealing with such cases, according to Davis.

He noted that standard guidelines are published through the Centers for Disease Control regarding precautions embalmers follow including disinfecting methods and the reliance on personal protective equipment. He added that funeral service professionals also receive training through the Occupational Safety and Health Program with regard to communicable diseases and blood-borne pathogens.

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