



An Advisory To Licenseesfrom the NC Board of Funeral Service

As the Coronavirus continues to spread across the United States, it has direct and immediate impact on North Carolina. With regard to the practice of funeral service, the NC Board of Funeral Service will send you regular updates on the crisis as more information is announced at both the state and federal levels.

As an important first step, please visit the Board website at www.ncbfs.org for links to current, critical sources of information regarding the virus and its impact on our state and profession.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION & UPDATES FOR LICENSEES

TRANSFERS

We are repeating information that appeared in an earlier advisory concerning the removal and transportation of decedents. Since this information first appeared, the number of deaths as a result of COVID-19 infection has increased significantly in the United States. In North Carolina, the number of deaths as a result of the Coronavirus is 65 while the number of cases reported among 91 counties is 3,651. As in other locations in the country, residents at long-term care and assisted living facilities in North Carolina have been significantly affected, and public health officials express concern about the rates of infection since residents are typically considered most at-risk for contracting severe illness from the infection.

Board staff offer the following information when making a transfer from these and other facilities.

- Upon receiving a call from a long-term care facility, ***please ask whether there are any special precautions, guidelines or procedures you need to follow upon arrival.*** Discuss your concerns with appropriate facility staff regarding the transfer and assure that you have adequate protective equipment in place.
- Follow standard precautions when making a transfer from any facility in accordance with guidelines published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Please visit their website for current advisories and guidance through the link we have provided above at ***Message from the Board.***
- When making a removal in a home, don a face mask and proper PPE if you know the decedent died of a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19. You may wish to let the family know that, for your protection and theirs during this pandemic, that you will be wearing appropriate personal protective equipment so they will be aware of what to expect when you arrive.

POSTMORTEM TESTING ON DECEDENTS

The Board received a communication from Dr. Michelle Aurelius, MD, Chief Medical Examiner, this week concerning the Medical Examiner System's Testing of Decedents for COVID-19. Dr. Aurelius has stated that "testing for coronavirus will not be performed on decedents who have undergone a medicolegal autopsy or external examination except in very select few cases that are supported by the Division of Public Health.

The full text of Dr. Aurelius' memorandum is available on the Board website under *Important Information and Communications* on the *Coronavirus Advisory* page.

NATIONAL AND STATE BOARD LICENSING EXAMINATIONS

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, The Conference has been working closely with Pearson VUE, their testing vendor, to assure the health and safety of examination candidates. In mid-March, Pearson VUE announced that they were closing their U.S. testing centers for thirty days but then extended that period of suspension through April 30 as the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths increased. All exam appointments that were scheduled through April 30 were canceled automatically by Pearson VUE.

This week, Pearson VUE designated The Conference's testing program as an essential service in providing critical support in the COVID-19 pandemic, and it has re-opened its testing centers. Conference candidates for national and state board examinations, LRR exams, and those registering for the North Carolina Pathology examination will be allowed to schedule licensure exams through the usual process beginning April 16, 2020. More sites will be available beginning May 1, 2020.

EMBALMING & COVID-19

The Board continues to receive questions concerning any requirements or special measures concerning embalming of bodies where there is confirmed or suspected COVID-19 as a cause of death. As noted in earlier advisories, the CDC has issued guidelines pertaining to embalming in COVID-19 cases, and we refer you to the link we have provided under **Message from the Board** on the Board website at www.ncbfs.org and then Coronavirus Advisory. The NFDA offers a wealth of information on dealing with the virus, and the NFDMA has an excellent publication available, *Coronavirus: Protocols & Best Practices Guide for Funeral Directors and Embalmers*.

We encourage you to visit the websites for both industry associations for additional information on the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on funeral professions:

- National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association <https://nfdma.com/>
 - National Funeral Directors Association <https://www.nfda.org/covid-19>
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