



Changes to End of Life Care and After Death Care During Covid-19

- **Hospice Care:**
 - NonCOVID-19 patients at in-patient units may receive limited visitors at this time. Check with the hospice and family prior to visiting. Visitors are screened upon entry
 - Families with individuals who are receiving home hospice care are encouraged to increase social distancing and safety measures
 - In-person hospice volunteer visits have been suspended
 - Hospices are maintaining separate COVID-19 areas
 - Volunteers and family members are relying on digital technology to connect
 - Some hospitals are creating COVID-19 hospice sections for individuals choosing not to be ventilated
 - Hospices are offering grief support services by phone and telehealth models

- **Funeral Homes:**
 - Funeral homes can still legally offer most traditional services for deaths related to COVID-19 but most are providing only limited services for all instances
 - Most funeral homes are using teleconferencing, phone, and email to coordinate services
 - Services vary widely depending on the establishment. Check directly with funeral homes to learn their changes to procedures and services
 - Funerals are limited to 10 or fewer people, which include the Funeral Director and the Officiant. Social distancing requirements are enforced.
 - Creative approaches to the social distancing requirements are being utilized by funeral homes, including staggered viewing times, parking lot waiting areas, “pod” visitation, cyber memorial walls, and streamed or recorded services

- **Cemeteries and Green Burial:**
 - Cemetery services are limited to 10 or fewer people, which include the Funeral Director and Officiant. Social distancing requirements are enforced.
 - Many cemeteries are only allowing immediate family to attend in-person burials. Check with individual cemeteries to learn their changes to procedures and services
 - Committal Services at veteran cemeteries have been suspended, including honors
 - Most COVID-19 related deaths occurring within a hospital or care facility will not qualify for Green Burial. This is due to plastics remaining from treatment and/or safety protocols for after death body care (body bags).

- **Crematoriums:**
 - Crematoriums are seeing an increase in services as direct cremation and burial are recommended for prompt disposition of COVID-19 decedents
 - Transportation and cremation arrangements continue by phone but services may be delayed due to the increase in direct cremations

- Unanticipated deaths at home:
 - During this time, families may experience an unanticipated death at home related to COVID-19
 - For COVID-19 deaths at home, safety precautions used during care of individuals should continue after death. This includes both the deceased and family members continuing to wear masks. Gloves should be used. The body should be moved as little as possible until transport services arrive. (see CDC guidelines for caregivers)
 - NonCovid-19 deaths in the home may increase as people delay or avoid public offices and hospitals for regular healthcare
 - Stay in regular contact with healthcare providers, especially if someone in the home is ill
 - Funeral homes and crematoriums providing transportation for the deceased have been instructed to treat most at home deaths as COVID-19 related (Exceptions include patients who die of a known cause under the care of a hospice provider)
 - Support is available for navigating home deaths through local and national end of life groups, guides, and doulas (see resources below)
 - At home deaths may provide opportunities to spend time with the deceased in a sacred and loving way.

- Delays in the traditional death care system:
 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, death care facilities may experience an increase in demand for their services
 - As a result of the increase in funeral, burial, and cremation demands, people experiencing at home deaths may see a delay in body transportation and scheduling of memorial services
 - Also as a result of the increase, people may have to contact service providers outside of their community
 - Short delays in transportation services are not an emergency and can be seen as an opportunity to create and safely share sacred space with the deceased

- Resources:
 - **Threshold Support Circle:** www.thresholdsupportcircle.org
info@thresholdsupportcircle.org
<https://www.facebook.com/ThresholdSupportCircle/>
 - **Maryland Health Department:** <https://health.maryland.gov/pages/home.aspx>
 - **Centers for Disease Control:** <https://www.cdc.gov/>
 - **Funeral Consumers Alliance of Maryland:**
<https://funerals.org/covid19-and-the-dead-facts-not-fear/>
 - **Green Burial Council:** <https://www.greenburialcouncil.org/>
 - **Green Burial Association of Maryland:** <https://greenburialmaryland.org/about/>
 - **Maryland Cremation Services:** <http://www.marylandcremationservices.com/>
 - **Death Café:** <https://deathcafe.com/>
 - **Home Funeral Guides and Pandemic Care** <https://vimeo.com/400666632>