



Ohio Funeral Directors Association

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Physicians Partnering with Funeral Directors During Crisis

On behalf of the 952 funeral home members of the Ohio Funeral Directors Association (OFDA), we are requesting the assistance of your organizations to address an urgent problem that has reached crisis stage due to the COVID pandemic.

We recognize the strain the pandemic has had on the healthcare system and truly appreciate the endless hours of care provided to ensure the health of your patients. The pandemic has had a profound impact on the deathcare profession as well. Funeral homes are often small businesses with limited staff, so the efficiency of operations is vital. Ohio funeral homes and crematories are experiencing historically high levels of decedents, which can easily overwhelm storage capacities. Some funeral directors have partnered with hospitals and coroners to provide decedent storage, because of insufficient/nonexistent morgue facilities.

Physicians can aid in the timely and honorable disposition of human remains by promptly issuing death certificates.

Section 3705.16(C) of the Ohio Revised Code requires the decedent's attending physician to certify the cause of death within 48 hours of the death occurring. Without the physician's certification, the death certificate cannot be filed. Any delay in the physician signing the death certificate causes a corresponding delay in burials and cremations, added emotional stress for families, as well as the family's inability to obtain needed death certificates to collect insurance proceeds, open estates, transfer and close security and bank accounts.

In a survey of OFDA member funeral homes conducted last week, 91% of them report that cremations and burials have been delayed because physicians are failing to sign death certificates within the 48-hour statutory time frame. Additionally, 68% of the survey responders report they are experiencing refrigeration and/or storage levels near or exceeding facility capacity to safely hold the human remains awaiting disposition.

OFDA requests your cooperation in communicating an emergency action or directive that would alert physicians to this urgent problem and strongly encourage them to comply with ORC 3705.16(C).

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