

How Cemetery & Crematory Staff Can Support Oregon Families Who Care for Their Own Dead

Oregon families have the legal right to custody and control of their own dead. Whether the death was anticipated or unanticipated, once time and cause of death are established, the family may choose to care for and transport the body, file the 24-hour notice of death and death certificate, arrange for disposition, and conduct any other aspect of after-death care without the assistance of a funeral director, or using one for some but not all of these tasks.

Legal Authority of Families

In Oregon, the legislative authority for families to act as unpaid funeral services practitioners is found in [ORS 432.005\(23\)\(a\)](#):

SYSTEM OF VITAL STATISTICS

432.005 Definitions. As used in this chapter, unless the context requires otherwise:

(23) "Person acting as a funeral service practitioner" means:

(a) A person other than a funeral service practitioner licensed under ORS 692.045, including but not limited to a relative, friend or other interested party, who performs the duties of a funeral service practitioner without payment;

Ways You Are Empowered to Assist Families

Your business may provide some of the services of a funeral director – for example, filing the death certificate in conjunction with a direct cremation. Or you may typically rely on a funeral home to walk a family through much of the process. Regardless of your services, cemetery and crematory staff that sell directly to the public can be prepared to work with families who are acting as their own funeral director:

1. Ensure that your staff are fully aware of the following information and are able to share it with interested families: "Under Oregon law, families may conduct any or all tasks commonly performed by a funeral home, except embalming (which is not required by Oregon law). This may include:
 - caring for the deceased (for example, bathing and dressing);
 - sheltering the deceased at home;
 - filing death notice, handling death certificate/transportation/disposition permit (families wanting to handle their own paperwork should request a packet from Oregon Health Authority's Center for Health Statistics Registration Unit, 971-673-1160);
 - transporting the body home or to another location for care and viewing (sometimes called a wake or vigil), and to place of final disposition;
 - and making all arrangements for any ceremony and for final disposition (for example, with a cemetery or crematory, or obtaining local county planning commission permission for a home burial)."
2. Unlike licensed funeral services practitioners, there is no legal time limit for how long families may spend caring for their deceased family member. Be prepared to receive the body directly from a family who has chosen to shelter and transport the deceased themselves.
3. Support the family and their community in considering options for meaningful hands-on engagement in ceremony and ritual. For a burial this can include carrying and lowering the body or remains and helping to close the grave. For cremation this could include decorating a cremation container obtained in advance or witnessing the cremation.
4. Familiarizing yourself with the additional information resources below will further equip you to serve families who choose to care for their dead.

Additional Information

Oregon Funeral Resources & Education www.oregonfuneral.org

National Home Funeral Alliance www.homefuneralalliance.org

Funeral Consumers Alliance www.funerals.org

National Home Funeral Alliance *How Funeral Directors Can Support Home Funeral Families*

Green Burial Council *Opening, Closing, and Maintaining a Green Burial Cemetery*

