

Guidance for Funeral Directors and Attendants of Funeral Services

Ministry of Health v.6 4 JANUARY 2021

People have always had a deep reverence for the dead. Rites and customs reflect their faith, their views on death and life after death. These rites and procedures give the bereaved support and assurance during the early grieving process. Funeral services serve not only for paying of final respects for the departed, but also to remind the bereaved of teachings of the faith and to show them solidarity and support. The public, while understanding the need for restrictions in these difficult times, have been greatly affected by the current limitations imposed on burial practices. This guidance is intended to ease the continuation of funeral practices by service providers at the morgue, funeral parlours and cemeteries now that Seychelles has reported community transmission.

Aim

To protect and comfort mourners and show respect for those who have died, without putting mourners at risk.

General Principles

- All funeral parlours, except the Surya Funeral Parlour, will remain closed until further notice.
- Communication will be maintained among all partners, especially the Ministry of Health, Padayachy Funeral Investment, faith-based organisations and the Police Department, to ease the process of bereavement for families.
- All persons assisting with or attending the funeral will undergo health screening, have their temperature recorded, and have their personal details kept in a register at all designated premises.
- Designated drivers of vehicles will keep records of all transfers and persons involved.
- The presence of one or two security officers at the morgue or funeral home and police officers at the place of worship and cemetery may be necessary to enforce adherence to recommendations.

Collection and Handling of the Deceased

- **For persons who died outside the Seychelles Hospital and other hospital facilities**
 - As of 4 May 2020, until further notice, the Police Department are responsible for transporting the body of a person who died outside a hospital facility to the mortuary. The Police may request the assistance of Padayachy Funeral Investment, if required.
 - These bodies will be handled by the hospital mortuary staff during designated working hours and with the assistance of the hospital security staff after normal working hours
 - If there is no further investigation required regarding the death e.g. post-mortem, the body may be transferred and stored at the Padayachy Funeral Investment morgue (depending on the relative's choice).
 - Bodies on La Digue will be transported to the mortuary by private vehicles outsourced by the Ministry of Health.
- **For persons who died at the Seychelles Hospital and other hospital facilities, including North East Point Complex**
 - Hospital staff are responsible to organise to take the bodies to the Mortuary.
 - If there is no further investigation required regarding the death e.g. post-mortem, the body may be transferred and stored at the Padayachy Funeral Investment morgue (depending on the relative's choice).
 - Thereafter, these bodies will be handled by Funeral parlour or mortuary staff only.
- **For persons who died of COVID-19 complications**, please consult the Ministry of Health guidance document [Infection Prevention and Control for the safe management of a dead body in the context of COVID-19 for Seychelles](#) derived from WHO Interim Guidance of 29 September 2020.

Before the Funeral

- Take time to clearly explain the standard operating procedures to the bereaved family; have an electronic version which can be quickly sent for instructions. Explain that, in the event that such conditions are not respected, the body will be taken directly from the mortuary to the cemetery for burial.
- Explain the need for public health measures
- To ensure the flow of people and to respect physical distancing at the mortuary, the Padayachy Funeral Investment will liaise with staff of the mortuary to provide family members with the appropriate time that they will present themselves at the mortuary
- With the aim of respecting physical distancing, only one funeral service will take place within a day at a single venue
- Inform the family that mourners who are unwell (e.g. fever, cough, runny nose, diarrhoea, loss of smell or taste) should not attend the service
- Advise the bereaved family to contact their religious leader to conduct any religious rites
- Inform the designated police officer/security officer/focal person once a date/time is set and confirm their presence at the morgue, ceremony and cemetery
- Advise on electronic versions of the order of service instead of booklets
- Talk about the possibility of a family member using a telephone to video the ceremony or live-streaming for real-time or later viewing by those who cannot attend the funeral

Other tips that may be given to the bereaved family

- Designate one trusted person to coordinate funeral procedures at all set locations
- Do not provide buses for the funeral
- For the radio announcement, inform people that it is a private ceremony; omit the date/time
- Discourage unnecessary visitors in your home and avoid stay-overs by family and friends
- Ask people to bring their own water or refreshments
- Should you offer refreshments, get one person to hand them out as individual packs.

Wakes are not permitted

At the Mortuary or Funeral Home

- Bodies will be handled at the hospital mortuary or Padayachy's Funeral Investment depending on where they have been stored prior to the funeral
- Where ritual ablutions/cleansing of the deceased are required, they should be performed by trained staff at the morgue or funeral home only.
- All bodies will be placed in a casket/coffin prior to burial/cremation
- Before dressing up the corpse, one family member will be allowed in the mortuary to identify the body
- After preparation of the body, **a glass cover will be placed over the casket if viewing is permitted**

At the Funeral Home only

- Close family members (spouse, parents, children and siblings) may be allowed to quickly view the body through the glass window before the casket/coffin is closed prior to departure to the place of ceremony;
- A maximum of 10 close family members will be allowed to view the body
- Do not allow mourners to touch or kiss the deceased or the casket/coffin
- Avoid aspersion with holy water
- Maintain social distancing at all times (one person to approach open casket at a time)
- Do NOT touch, kiss or hug anyone who is not from the same household as you

- Practices like ‘passing children over coffins’ should be discouraged
- Clean and disinfect the surface of the coffin before departure to the place of funeral

Increased vigilance

- Remind the family and mourners that anyone with symptoms should not attend the funeral

Basic Hygiene

- Wear a mask properly at all times, both indoors and outdoors
- Do NOT touch, kiss or hug anyone who is not from the same household as you
- Encourage handwashing with soap and water
- Apply cough etiquette; if you need to cough or clear your throat, do so with your mask on
- Avoid touching face, eyes and mouth
- Remind and encourage mourners to have wipes and hand sanitisers on hand and dispose of used wipes/tissues in a bin or plastic bag
- Provide a bin at the viewing area and parlour (if the ceremony is being held there)

Cleaning and disinfection

- Clean and disinfect high traffic areas and frequently touched surfaces/items after each service or client with common household disinfectant, or use other common household cleaning agents.
- Keep a checklist of what needs to be cleaned, in accordance with standard protocols and guidelines
- Provide handwashing facilities and paper towels
- Have hand sanitizer available
- Clean and disinfect vehicles in accordance with standard protocols and guidelines

At the place of worship/ceremony

(please refer to [Guidance for religious leaders for resuming funeral services](#) *Department of Health v.6* 31 DECEMBER 2020)

At the Cemetery/Crematorium

Interment/cremation can follow normal practices, however:

- Wear a mask properly at all times, indoors or outdoors
- Allow for physical distancing
- Apply basic hygiene, as above
- Do NOT touch, kiss or hug anyone who is not from the same household as you
- Remind and encourage mourners to have wipes and hand sanitisers on hand and dispose of used wipes/tissues in a plastic bag
- For burials, cemetery personnel should wear appropriate protective gear.
- Only cemetery personnel are allowed to handle shovels/spades. Do not pass shovels/spades from one person to another. Mourners may take a handful of dirt from a proffered shovel to scatter over the casket.
- Only one or two persons designated by the family will arrange flowers on the grave once signaled by cemetery staff.
- For either burial or cremation, do not remove the body from the casket/coffin before entering the crematorium area or prior to burial

After the Funeral

- Debrief with the staff; address any issues which arose
- Have a checklist of what has been cleaned and when
- If there is a need call the family and check on their wellbeing and get their feedback