

CHECKLIST FOR SURVIVORS

Prepared by Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Ohio (FCACO); 614-263-4632 and www.funeralsohio.org

Much of the decision-making may already have been done by the deceased if they were members of FCACO. Be sure to find that out BEFORE making arrangements or contacting a funeral home.

1. WHEN DEATH OCCURS

- **Unexpected death (at home or elsewhere):** Call 911. The body may be temporarily held at the morgue.
- **Death at home:** If the decedent has been under medical care recently but not in a hospice program, call the police (911), who will determine if the coroner needs to be notified.
- **Death in a Hospice Program:** Call the hospice nurse for instructions.
- **Death in a hospice facility, hospital or nursing home:** A doctor will be called to pronounce death.
- **In all cases, someone will need to provide the contact information for final disposition (the name and number of the Funeral Home, or name and number of the person in charge of the home funeral).**

2. DECISION MAKING

The first step in making the transition less stressful is to be sure that family members know who has been designated to make necessary decisions. A trusted family member, executor or designated agent should know the combination to a safe or location of the key to a safety deposit box. (Note: only persons recognized by the bank as having legal authority will be allowed access to the safety deposit box.)

- Contact those who will have responsibilities (e.g. “Designated Representative for Disposition of Bodily Remains,” family members, funeral director, clergy, executor/administrator of estate; attorney; accountant, etc). See section 7 for the default priority order of disposition decision makers if there was no legally Designated Representative form completed.
- Keep a list of decisions and actions completed.
- Locate documents needed for various situations: (e.g., Forms for Preplanning and the Designated Representative for Disposition of Bodily Remains; certificates of birth and marriage; divorce decree; military discharge papers; citizenship papers; will; titles to home, automobile, cemetery plots; contract for a pre-paid funeral; insurance policies; pensions and other financial statements; bank records, tax returns, etc).
- Determine if there are available funds specified for the payment of expenses related to disposition.

3. INFORMATION NEEDED FOR OHIO DEATH CERTIFICATE

Typically, a funeral director handles this form, but the family must supply the personal information:

- Decedent’s legal name and sex
- Social Security number
- Dates of military service, branch of service and type of separation
- Marital status and name of surviving spouse, including maiden name as applicable
- Decedent’s education and ethnic origin
- Usual Occupation
- Father’s name and Mother’s maiden name
- Informant’s name, relationship and address
- Method and place of disposition; cemetery section and lot and grave number if applicable

4. THE DISPOSITION PROCESS

- **Preferences regarding a funeral:** Honor the preferences of the deceased. In the case of direct cremation, decisions regarding a memorial service can be delayed. For a typical funeral, someone will have to make decisions regarding selection of a casket and other services. By federal law, the funeral home must provide a General Price List, and you should receive an itemized contract of your choices. Read this carefully before signing. It is often useful to be accompanied by a family member, friend or clergy person to avoid undue pressure to purchase expensive items and services.
- **Family Home Funeral:**
 - Contact the County Registrar for a Burial Transit Permit if the family transports the body
 - It is advisable to wash and dress the body within a few hours of death
 - You may use a burial shroud or build or purchase a casket

- Dry ice may be placed around the body to delay decomposition
- Contact the cemetery or crematorium as appropriate
- **Burial:** Arrange for a burial plot if not already purchased. Cremains may be buried, placed in a columbarium niche or kept in a container. Ohio law does not control disposition of cremains.
- **Obituary:** Gather personal information which should include the time and place of the viewing and service if there is one. Consider placing the obituary in newspapers in other cities if the deceased has family or business associates or close friends there. Most newspapers charge for an obituary.

5. OTHER DECISIONS

- **Funeral/ Memorial Service:** Solicit from family members information about favorite hymns, music, scripture, and obtain photographs and memorabilia for display. Family and friends may wish to participate in a eulogy.
- **Reception:** Usually held after the service.
- **Flowers:** Determine how these are to be distributed after the funeral.
- **Death Certificate:** Obtain sufficient certified copies for all financial accounts, insurance policies, Veteran's Administration, benefits administrators, etc.

6. AFTER DISPOSITION

- Social Security is notified electronically after the death certificate is filed with the Department of Health (Vital Statistics). Other important contacts include pension administrators, creditors and potential heirs. Tasks include determining income sources and expenses, arranging for payment of outstanding medical and other bills, closing financial accounts, closing club memberships and subscriptions, notifying the post office and arranging for forwarding. The probate process may take many months to complete particularly if there are significant assets.

7. PRIORITY ORDER OF THE RIGHT OF DISPOSITION

(Section 2108.81 of ORC); Effective Date: 10-12-2006; 2008 SB196 07-06-2009

The right of disposition of the deceased person is assigned to the following persons, if mentally competent adults who can be located with reasonable effort, in the order of priority stated:

- (1) The surviving spouse;
- (2) The sole surviving child, or, if there is more than one surviving child, all of the surviving children, collectively;
- (3) The surviving parent or parents;
- (4) The surviving sibling, whether of the whole or of the half blood or, if there is more than one sibling of the whole or of the half blood, all of the surviving siblings, collectively;
- (5) The surviving grandparent or grandparents;
- (6) The surviving grandchild, or if there is more than one surviving grandchild, all of the surviving grandchildren collectively;
- (7) The lineal descendants of the deceased person's grandparents
- (8) The person who was the deceased person's appointed guardian at the time of the person's death;
- (9) Any other person willing to assume the right of disposition, including the personal representative of the deceased person's estate or the licensed funeral director with custody of the deceased person's body, after attesting in writing that a good faith effort has been made to locate the persons in divisions (B)(1) to (8) of this section.
- (10) If the deceased person was an indigent person or other person the final disposition of whose body is the financial and statutory responsibility of the state or a political subdivision of this state, the public officer or employee responsible for arranging the final disposition of the remains of the deceased person.

Disclaimer: FCACO attempts to verify the information in this form, but cannot guarantee all. Legal questions should be directed to your attorney.