



COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR FUNERAL SERVICES AND BURIALS

UPDATED ON NOVEMBER 18, 2020

Note: Due to increasing rates of new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, Alameda County is transitioning to the Purple Tier (Widespread Risk Level) on the State's Blueprint for a Safer Economy. This means that effective Wednesday, November 18, 2020 and until further notice, indoor worship is not permitted. This guidance has been updated to reflect this change, with activities that are not permitted or applicable at this time crossed out.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

To provide general guidance and best practices for safe reopening of funeral services and burials. Contact COVIDRecovery@acgov.org if you have questions or require technical assistance. For business resources, visit <https://covid-19.acgov.org/recovery.page>.

NOTE: The [Alameda County Reopening Plan](#) is in alignment with the [State's Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#), but there will be areas where Alameda County is more restrictive than the State. The more restrictive guidance prevails.

BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS FOR FUNERAL AND BURIAL SERVICES

1. Prepare and implement a [COVID-19 Site Specific Protection Plan](#) based on local and [State industry specific guidance](#).
2. Train employees on [COVID-19 prevention](#), symptom screening, face coverings, and importance of physical distancing and frequent handwashing.
3. Implement [symptom screening](#) for all employees and do not allow employees who exhibit symptoms to come to work.
4. Develop cleaning and disinfecting protocols.
5. Establish physical distancing guidelines.
6. Ensure compliance with the [Alameda County Face Covering Order](#) by all persons in your place of business (customers, employees, suppliers, etc.).
7. Comply with guidance issued by the [State's Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#), all [Local Health Officer Orders](#), and applicable federal, California, and local provisions for paid sick leave for individuals who cannot safely work for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

FUNERAL AND BURIAL SERVICE GUIDANCE

This guidance is for individuals and families to safely arrange funeral services for the loss of a loved one in collaboration with funeral directors, and community or religious leaders.



- Funeral and burial services must be facilitated outdoors with attendance of 100 or fewer people. ~~indoors with up to 100 persons, or 25% of the facility's maximum capacity, whichever is less.~~
- Practice physical distancing by maintaining at least six feet between attendees, facility staff, and clergy or officiants when services are held.
- Face coverings that cover the mouth and nose should be worn to help lower the risk of spreading COVID-19.
- For outdoor services places of worship may setup shade structures to protect from the elements. Please reach out to your local Fire Code authority and your local planning department about restrictions and permits.
- Umbrellas, canopies, and other shade structures must:
 - Be open on three sides to allow for the free flow of air through the space **or**
 - Have two (2) one-half walls or “pony wall” of no more than four (4) feet in height and no more than one (1) solid wall **or**
 - Have two (2) canopy mesh side walls and no more than one (1) solid wall.
- Only certain types of heating devices can be used under tents, canopies, sun shelters or other temporary physical structures. Forced air heaters situated outside the structure or electric heaters within the structure may be suitable options— please contact your local Fire Code authority for more information and any needed approval for use. Per California Fire Code, open flames or other devices emitting flame, fire or heat or any flammable or combustible liquids, gas, charcoal or other cooking device or any other unapproved devices are not permitted inside or located within 20 feet of the tent or membrane structures while open to the public unless approved by the fire code official.
- Wind screen walls that include but are not limited to temporary and movable tall potted plants or temporary and moveable physical structures, must have the ability to stand on their own and be braced for wind load, should be no more than four (4) feet in height.
- Provide vehicle-based gatherings with proper precautions including face coverings when windows are open and keeping vehicle passengers within the same household. See [vehicle-based guidance](#).
- Limit sharing of items, such as worship aids, prayer books, and other items shared or passed by clergy and attendees during religious rituals. Instead, ensure items are only handled by one individual or household during the funeral or burial service.
- Withhold from engaging in activities that produce respiratory droplets, which may contain virus, (e.g., singing or chanting) especially when participants are in close proximity to each other. If attendees choose to sing or chant, encourage them to wear masks and increase distance between people to greater than six feet.



- Discontinue food and beverage offerings, particularly those that are self-serve and/or potluck and family-style. Use single-serve, disposable containers and ensure individuals serving food wash their hands frequently and wear disposable gloves and face coverings.
- In-person religious services and cultural ceremonies can involve extended periods of close contact, increasing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 at these events. As such, it is recommended that service organizers consider maintaining contact information of attendees and that this information be kept by the service's organizer for at least 21 days.

COPING WITH GRIEF, MAKING ARRANGEMENTS, AND OTHER BEST PRACTICES

- Take part in an activity that has significance to you and the loved one you have lost.
- Use grief counseling services, support groups, or hotlines, especially those that can be offered over the phone or online; or seek support from a mental health provider.
- Seek support from trusted community or faith leaders, family, and/or friends as a way to cope.
- Create a virtual memory book, blog, or webpage to remember your loved one, and ask family and friends to contribute their memories and stories.
- Use virtual or phone meetings to plan funeral arrangements. If an in-person meeting is required, wear a face covering, keep six feet away, and wash your hands frequently with soap and water. Stay home if you are feeling sick.
- Discuss your cultural or religious traditions and any funeral wishes of the deceased with family members and the people you are working with (e.g. funeral home staff, clergy, or officiants).
- Consult religious or cultural leaders to identify any changes to funeral rites and rituals that need to be made to ensure everyone's safety.
- Consider modified service arrangements with a small number of immediate family and friends; and then holding additional memorial services when physical distancing guidelines are less restrictive.
- Space out seating arrangements for attendees who do not live in the same household to at least 6 feet apart between household groups.
- Attendees from different households should wave or nod instead of holding or shaking hands, hugging, or kissing.
- Consider delivering food or gifts to grieving family members in ways that keep people at least 6 feet apart, mailing care packages, or giving families gift cards for food delivery services.