

Step-by-Step Do-It-Yourself Funeral

To-do BEFORE the death if possible:

- 1) Designate a **family member or friend** to act as the Dispositioner. The Dispositioner files for a death certificate and drives vehicle that will bring the body to place of final disposition (cemetery or crematory). Step 9 has a link to a free downloadable manual containing a list of 18 task/roles you can assign friends and family other tasks to fulfill.
- 2) **Call the office of Vital Records** in the county where the death will most likely occur. Let the Registrar know that the family plans to file for a Death Certificate themselves. Go to the State website health.utah.gov/vitalrecords/fileadeath/fileadeath.htm to print out a form that helps you gather the information for the death certificate that the registrar will need.
- 3) Find a **casket**: Build one, buy one or delegate someone else to do so.
- 4) **Call a cemetery** or crematory to let them know family will be acting as the Dispositioner. They will forewarn you of any cemetery rules you must comply with. If you prefer burial in a **non-commercial cemetery**, get permission from a contact person for that cemetery. For a list of rural cemeteries in Utah go to history.utah.gov, click on "research and collections", then "cemeteries". If you prefer burial on **your own private rural property** there are no Utah State regulations. For more details download the **Utah chapter** of laws at www.Funerals.org, click on "Bookstore" or email Joyceinutah@gmail.com for more details.
- 5) Veterans who desire a Casket Flag may fill out form 21-2008: at www.cem.va.gov/bbene/bflags.asp. After death bring it to the post office to receive the flag. Honorably discharged veterans get free burial at a Veterans National Cemeteries which includes grave, vault, opening and closing, marker, and setting fee. More info: www.cem.va.gov
- 6) Write the Program for the funeral (leaving the date of death blank)

To do AFTER the death:

- 7) **When an Unexpected death occurs: call emergency law enforcement. If you are not sure if the person is dead call 911 for an ambulance.**
When an Expected Death occurs: at home is the best situation- Call the Hospice you are working with or the attending physician if seen within 30 days otherwise call a non-emergency phone # of a local law enforcement agency.
Hospital death: Let the Doctor and nurses know asap (even before death) that you will NOT be using a funeral director. You will need to get the Death Certificate and others permits at the dept of vital records in the county where death occurred BEFORE moving the body.
- 8) **Call the office of Vital Records** in the county where the death occurred. Let the Registrar know that the family plans to file for a Death Certificate themselves. Go to the State website health.utah.gov/vitalrecords/fileadeath/fileadeath.htm to print out a form that helps you

gather the information for the death certificate that the registrar will need. See step #10 for further steps with the Registrar.

- 9) **Prepare the body** for casketing: Treat it with the same modesty as you would any ill person who is bed-bound. A booklet on how to ease carrying of the body, preventing seepage of body fluids and other logistics are on this website: <http://www.crossings.net/resources.html> click on the words “**have made it available here**”. Page 11 lists helpful supplies to have on hand.

Set Features and slow decomposition: Within a couple hours of death there are marked signs of stiffening of the body, called rigor mortis. So you want to close the eyes, mouth, and decide where the hands will be within the 1st couple hrs. After 24 hrs the muscles begin to relax again, which is a sign of decomposition. Keeping the body cool slows down all of these processes.
- You may need 16 lbs/day of dry ice to keep an average adult at about 40 degrees. Dry ice may be \$1/lb or more. Using thick gloves (like winter gloves), wrap the dry ice in a **paper bag** then **cloth** and place under the body... The room must be ventilated because of the carbon dioxide dry ice releases. In the winter, an open window in a separate room can substitute for the dry ice.

- 10) **File** for a Death Certificate at the Vital Records office of **the health department** of the county where death occurred. Bring with you:
- 1) The worksheet found at health.utah.gov/vitalrecords (fill out as much as you can before death occurs)
 - 2) i.d. (of the person filing the paperwork –aka “Dispositioner”)
 - 3) The ability to pay \$100-\$400 (**Death Certificate registration fee:** most counties \$100 during business hrs (Utah county charges according to how long it takes them to enter the data or \$75, a couple counties don’t charge (most counties charge \$300 for weekend/holiday service), **Medical Examiners permit (includes a transit permit):** \$52, **1st death certificate:** \$16, **Extra copies** of the Death Cert: \$8).
 - 4) TIME (to get the doctors’ signature): Give the doctor a heads up and the dispositioners cell phone # in case the dr will call to tell you where he/she is. Hopefully the Doctor is on EDEN (Utah’s Electronic Death Entry Network so he/she can sign it electronically instead of you going to get the signature and then going back to Vital Records).
You will want the death certificate much sooner than the legal 5 days because though a funeral director can **transport** the body or arrange **publication of an obituary**, you, without the D.C. and M.E.’s permit in hand, cannot.
Some have been disappointed with the slow pace when they entrust filing the death certificate to Hospice or a funeral director, so enlist your most determined family member instead of the tempting offers of well-meaning professionals.
- 11) **Talk to clergy/Secure venues** for:
- a viewing (body visible) or visitation (body not visible: closed casket/or no casket),
 - a ceremony (funeral: body present, memorial: body not present)

- the final disposition (burial or cremation). **A cemetery** needs to know as far ahead as possible.

12) **Delegate someone to notify others** of the place and time of finalized plans.

13) By now you may have received the Death Certificate and Burial Transit Permit needed to move the body. A **van** (with back seats down) or **pick-up truck** are ideal options for transporting the body in a casket.

14) Finalize the **obituary** and bring it to the newspaper with the death certificate. Obituaries are expensive. A typical length runs between \$400 to \$1000. A death notice should be free.

15) Finalize the Funeral **Program** and have it printed.

16) Transport to the place of ceremony, entering in the widest doors possible for pallbearers. Place a cloth covered table for the casket to rest on. You don't need a casket dolly to move the casket around the building. Let the pall bearers work. If they carried the casket from the home to a vehicle then they've had practice

How to **Pre-plan** a Funeral

1) Fill out a Funeral Planning Form (www.utahfunerals.org Click on Final Arrangements).

2) Figure the cost and how to pay for your funeral (we recommend a dedicated savings account payable to a beneficiary at time of death).

3) Talk to your family. Answer their questions. Your example in speaking comfortably about death will make it

easier for them to communicate with each other and work together after the death occurs.

4) Give copies of your funeral plan or email everything (including this document) to your family and chosen dispositioner.