

Bereavement Authority Ontario (BOA)

Information Available as of April 5, 2020

Questions and Answers Regarding Funeral Practices During COVID-19 Pandemic in Ontario

Q1. How many people can attend a funeral or visitation?

A1. Currently, 10 is the maximum, not counting funeral home staff. We also encourage families and funeral home operators to have even fewer people than 10 at funerals and visitations.

The Registrar's Directive on this was issued on March 28.

Things may change, quickly. If the BAO's funeral home licensees can't keep up safely with the demand – funerals will be put on hold.

We have not reached that point. We hope that measure will not be needed. We are confident that funeral homes will be able to meet the demand, even as the COVID-19 surge increases. Our licensees are professionals.

Q2. Can I delay my loved one's funeral?

A2. Yes. Funerals, visitations and celebrations of life can be deferred.

*But we remind people that interment (burials, cremations and alternate dispositions) must proceed immediately during this time. Please understand that this is a state of emergency.

Q3. Do funeral homes and others in the bereavement sector have enough personal protective equipment (PPE)?

A3. We know that the bereavement sector will need more PPE – and very soon – as COVID-19 surges in Ontario, Canada and the world.

The BAO has made this very clear to the Ontario government. We have been very impressed with the government's response to this unprecedented state of emergency. We know they are working hard to provide PPE to the bereavement sector. We also understand that there is huge demand for PPE at hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and in the entire health care system.

Q4. What PPE practices are followed at cemeteries, funeral homes, crematoriums and by all bereavement sector operators and staff during COVID-19?

A4. The BAO's previously posted Routine Practices in the Bereavement Care Setting covers this. Now, more than ever, vigilance on the use of personal protective equipment is needed.

Q5. Is it safe to attend a funeral or visitation?

A5. Follow the rules:

- Physical distancing of two metres (six feet) apart from all other people; and,
- No more than 10 people at a funeral or visitation, not counting funeral home staff.

Q6. Can I hug my deceased family member?

A6. That is not advisable. People should also stay at least two metres (six feet) away from the body of their loved one. We know how difficult this is on families and friends of the deceased. Please understand this is a state of emergency and your safety is number one.

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<https://thebao.ca/more-qsas/>