

WHAT DOES A FUNERAL HOME CHARGE?

Professional Services. This mandatory fee is for their time and expertise and varies greatly among funeral homes.

Other professional services. This fee includes optional charges for embalming, cosmetology, hair, etc.

Use of the facilities for visitation, service, etc. This fee also varies among funeral homes. Some families choose to decline this fee, receive visitors in their home, and have a graveside-only service.

Use of the funeral home's transportation. A family may decline any or all of these services.

Merchandise. This includes casket, burial vault, burial clothing, programs, thank-you cards, etc. Prices and choices vary greatly for these optional products.

Cash Advance Charges. These are fees that the funeral home covers on behalf of the family, like grave opening fees of a cemetery, county fees for death certificates, florist bills, clergy or church use fees. *Most* funeral homes charge only what the service costs them, so families affect this charge by their choices.

HOW DO I FILE A COMPLAINT ABOUT A FUNERAL HOME?

You can contact the Texas Funeral Service Commission at P.O. Box 12217, Capitol Station, Austin, TX 78711.

BEFORE YOU CHOOSE A FUNERAL HOME

Financial Information for families

Making final arrangements for a loved one is a difficult task, but many families find some comfort in planning the final farewell to their child. Such services need not be expensive to be meaningful.

Because costs can vary by thousands of dollars from one funeral home to the next, families are encouraged to think carefully about what is needed and desired, then make several calls to ask questions before making a decision.

No one connected with the hospital is allowed to recommend one funeral home over another, but our chaplains and social workers are available to assist you with other related concerns.

Cook Children's Medical Center
Pastoral Care Department
801 Seventh Avenue
Fort Worth, TX 76107

Phone (682)885-4030
Fax (682)885-7969

WHAT FINANCIAL INFORMATION MUST THE FUNERAL HOME GIVE A FAMILY?

- Price lists for all services, caskets, outer containers, and other merchandise available.
- A signed agreement, which lists items you selected and the cost of each item.

WHAT IF WE CANNOT AFFORD TO BURY OUR CHILD?

Ask the chaplain or social worker to help you look for options. **Do not** sign an agreement to pay more than you can afford. You will be obligated for the full amount, usually before the burial.

In Texas, free burial is offered for residents who truly cannot afford one. For Tarrant County burials, call the funeral home of your choice and tell them you need County Assistance. You will be asked some financial questions. If you qualify, you will be offered a simple casket, a burial plot, and the opportunity for a graveside service. If you “upgrade” or agree to pay for additional services, you will void your eligibility for any county assistance.

Perhaps your family has some very limited funds. Explain your financial situation to the funeral home. If the deceased is an infant, some funeral homes in Fort Worth will accept \$300 or less as payment in full. Other families end up paying \$5,000 or even \$10,000. If you need help in speaking with a funeral home, our social workers and chaplains will be honored to assist you.

Most funerals for infants and children are simple, lovely, and personalized graveside services which honor their young lives and do not overly burden the grieving family. If your family does not have a clergy connection, our chaplains are often available to conduct a local service.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

In Texas, a body can be buried, entombed, cremated, or donated for scientific study.

Cremation: Some families contact a crematorium, choose direct cremation without embalming, and have a memorial service at their church or a park. Families who wish embalming, an open casket, or other traditional funeral services should contact a funeral home. A body cannot be cremated until 48 hours after death, without a waiver from the Medical Examiner. Cremated remains pose no health hazard and can be scattered or kept in any place unless forbidden by law.

Burial or entombment: Contact a funeral home of your choice. One of the first questions they will ask is whether the family wishes for the body to be embalmed. Embalming is required by state law when the body is held or in transit for more than 24 hours and not refrigerated at a temperature within the range of 34-40°F. Almost all funeral homes require that the body be embalmed if the family chooses viewing of the body or an open casket.

Use of a Licensed Funeral Home: Texas state law does not prohibit burial without using a licensed funeral director. However, almost all families use a funeral home. Families who wish to transport their child’s body directly to a funeral home should contact the chaplain or social worker to ask for a letter that will explain matters to law enforcement officials.

Generally, local ordinances or deed restrictions prohibit private burials within city limits or close proximity to metropolitan areas. The family is responsible for checking with local zoning authorities for applicable burial laws. If a family wishes to transport a body across state lines, they must first contact a funeral home and have the body embalmed.

Cook Children’s tries to honor the wishes of families, but cannot knowingly release a child’s body to a family wishing to bury or otherwise dispose of a body in an illegal manner.

How to donate a body for research: Contact the State of Texas Anatomical Board, 301 University Blvd., Galveston, TX 77555-1301; phone (409) 772-1293. Not all bodies are accepted for donation, so arrangements should be made in advance, if possible.