

TO: Vermont Nursing Homes, Long Term Care Facilities and Hospice Facilities
FROM: Vermont Department of Health

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Recommendations to Facilitate the Transfer of Deceased Patients from Nursing Homes, Long Term Care Facilities and Hospice Facilities

The message below was developed by and is shared on behalf of the Vermont Funeral Directors Association:

It is important that we work together to collaborate knowledge and practice to expedite the transfer of dead human remains in order that a family may proceed to make plans for their loved one.

To help expedite response by the funeral establishment it would be helpful to have the following:

- Verbal consent documented from next of kin and contact information immediately available for a funeral establishment to reach out to them.
- If a respiratory infection is the cause of death, be sure to advise the funeral establishment when the transfer is requested.
- Funeral homes, like all health care providers and first responders, are experiencing a shortage of PPE equipment. Therefore, only appropriate PPE for the circumstances will be used.
- Assuming most facilities do not have access to shrouds, at this time, we ask that remains be wrapped in a sheet with airways covered to minimize inadvertent aerosolization.
- The practice of escorting a patient to the transfer vehicle with a facility quilt should cease at this time.
- To minimize exposures for patients, facility staff and funeral home staff, as well as minimize access to patient floors, facilities should identify an area, near an exit when possible, with easy access for funeral home staff to transfer remains from the facility. In some facilities, this may be the lobby or backdoor access.
- This will require a coordinated effort and outreach between the facility and funeral establishment about the estimated time of arrival. Please understand that transfers may not be as expeditious as they typically are, but the funeral home staff will work with you to coordinate. If the deceased patient is in a multi-bed unit, you should consider identifying a location in your facility for a temporary holding site or morgue so the deceased can be moved to that area until you have confirmed the transfer schedule.
- If stretchers are not available to move the deceased patient to a more accessible area, please refer to your facility's disaster plan on the transfer of in bed patients.

- Of course, be familiar with CDC guidelines specific for health care workers, nursing homes and other facilities. None of these recommendations are designed to suggest any non-compliance with that information but rather to provide some practical suggestions as we work together to serve the deceased and our communities during this difficult time.

Thank from our members to you and your staff for all that you do to provide care and comfort.

Vermont Funeral Directors Association

If you have any questions, please contact the HAN Coordinator at 802-859-5900 or vthan@vermont.gov

HAN Message Type Definitions

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation may not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Info Service Message: Provides general correspondence from VDH, which is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.