



Planning a Home Funeral in Michigan

What is a "home funeral?"

"A 'home funeral' is a noncommercial, family-centered response to death that involves the family and its social community in the care and preparation of the body for burial or cremation, and/or in planning and carrying out related rituals or ceremonies, and/or in the burial or cremation itself. A 'home funeral' may occur entirely within the family home or not. It is differentiated from the 'institutional funeral' by its emphasis on minimal, noninvasive care and preparation of the body, on its reliance on the family's own social networks for assistance and support, and on the relative or total absence of commercial funeral providers in its proceedings." - Holly Stevens, Project Leader, *Undertaken With Love: A Home Funeral Guide for Congregations and Communities*

Is it Legal in Michigan?

It is legal for the family to care for their own dead in the home for a few days immediately following death.

Do I have to hire a funeral director?

Yes. Current Michigan law states that a funeral director must sign the death certificate and supervise transport of the body to final disposition (crematory or cemetery).

In addition, most health care facilities will not release the body into the care of the family, so funeral home staff must transport the body to your home.

Not all funeral directors are supportive of home funeral. It is highly recommended to find a supportive funeral director ahead of time.

Is embalming required?

Very rarely. However, most funeral homes will not allow public viewing without it. If you know you do not want embalming, having a 'home funeral' will allow for as many visitors as you wish.

How does one care for the body?

The body is washed and dressed and laid on a bed or couch. It is cooled with dry ice.

After Death Home Care

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Expected Death at Home in Hospice Care

At the time of death, notify the hospice agency. The nurse will come to the home and certify the death. The death certificate will be generated, signed by the agency's medical director, and sent to the chosen funeral director. The nurse will call the funeral director from the home. Let them know that you are planning to have a home funeral. When you are ready to proceed to the crematory or cemetery the funeral director will supervise* the transport.

Death at an Institution (hospital or nursing home)

The facility staff will certify the death. The death certificate will be generated, signed by the agency's medical director, and sent to the chosen funeral director. Most institutions will not release the body into the care of the family. Therefore, you must make arrangements with the funeral director to transport the body to the home. There is a fee for this. Contact the funeral director when you are ready to proceed to the crematory or cemetery. They will supervise* the transport.

Unexpected Death from accident or unknown cause

The police must be notified. The body will likely be taken for an autopsy. This decision is made at the time by the police and the county medical examiner (coroner). Depending on the circumstances, after the death has been certified, it may be possible to have the body brought home. Proceed as above in the case of a death at an institution.

* Michigan law states that the funeral director must sign the transit permit indicating the final disposition. Some funeral directors interpret the law to mean that they must transport the body themselves, while some funeral directors are willing for the family to transport the body in their own vehicle if they are prepared to do so.