



Kathleen Toomey, Commissioner • Brian Kemp, Governor
William R. Grow, MD, FACP, District Health Director
325 West Savannah Avenue, Valdosta, Georgia 31601
Phone: (229) 333-5290 • Fax: (229) 333-7822

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Contact: Kristin Patten
kristin.patten@dph.ga.gov or 229-333-5370

Social Distancing Guidelines Critical for Funerals & Funeral Homes

Public health officials are strongly urging funeral homes to immediately adhere to social distancing protocol for funerals, graveside services, and memorials to help control the spread of COVID-19.

Dr. William R. Grow, MC, FACP, district health director for the Georgia Department of Public Health's South Health District, said that because there is currently not an effective cure for the disease, and because it's transferred from person to person through respiratory droplets, particularly through sneezing, coughing, and touching with contaminated hands, it's essential that everyone practice social distancing as much as possible by limiting the crowds at public and private gatherings.

"While we understand people gathering during an event like this, it is still important to try and avoid close contact. Try to keep six feet between people and wash your hands frequently," he says, adding that anyone coughing or sneezing should not attend, even though they are also grieving.

"Our goal within Public Health is to lessen the spread of this virus, and with that in mind we hope people will be able to find ways to mourn that can prevent spread," Dr. Grow added. "If possible consider a live viewing of services for loved ones who cannot travel to the site or might be sick."

There are a number of precautions funeral homes can take to stop the spread of COVID-19, including graveside burial for family members only, with a memorial service held at a later date.

Public health also recommends, for those funeral homes that have multiple services in a day, to disinfect the car in between use for each family.

Funeral Homes are urged to:

- Have someone at the door with hand gel or sanitized wipes for hands during visitation
- Frequently clean door handles and other points of contact
- Discourage anyone who is sick from attending the service

Get updated COVID-19 information at southhealthdistrict.com/covid19, dph.georgia.gov and cdc.gov.

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