

How Funeral Directors Can Support Virginia Families Who Wish to Direct or Participate in Care for Their Own Dead

“The most important support funeral directors can provide home funeral families is the compassionate understanding that this is something families feel called to do for their loved one and themselves, their friends, and community. Home funeral families by and large are looking for simplicity, self-reliance, personal responsibility, and a shared, intimate experience that only they can conceive of and conduct.”

—Lee Webster, National Home Funeral Alliance (NHFA)
“How Funeral Directors Can Support Home Funeral Families”

Virginia families have the legal right to custody and control of their own dead. Whether the death was anticipated or unanticipated, once time and cause of death are established, the family may choose to care for and transport the body, file the death certificate, arrange for disposition, and conduct any other aspect of after-death care. Families choosing to conduct a home funeral may do so without assistance from a funeral director or may prefer to have a funeral director handle some but not all of these tasks.

How can funeral directors assist families who choose home funerals?

Please see also: *“How Funeral Directors Can Support Home Funeral Families”* for 12 categories of services and goods funeral homes can offer to support home funeral families. Written by Lee Webster and published by the National Home Funeral Alliance, www.homefuneralalliance.org.

Legal Authority of Families

In Virginia the legislative authority for families to act as unpaid funeral services practitioners is found **Virginia Code § 32.1-263-b:**

The licensed funeral director, funeral service licensee, office of the state anatomical program, or next of kin as defined in § 54.1-2800 who first assumes custody of a dead body shall complete the certificate of death...If a member of the next of kin of the deceased completes the certificate of death, he shall file the certificate of death in accordance with the requirements of subsection A but shall not be required to file the certificate of death electronically.

Information to Provide Families

- Virginia Funeral Resources & Education www.virginiafuneral.org
- National Home Funeral Alliance (NHFA) www.homefuneralalliance.org
- Funeral Consumers Alliance www.funerals.org