



OKLAHOMA FUNERAL BOARD

April 3, 2020

Dear Colleague,

As Oklahoma continues to confront the coronavirus (COVID-19) my thoughts are with everyone affected. This pandemic is a global humanitarian challenge that evolves day to day, and we're all doing our best to navigate uncharted territory. Each of us has the power, through our choices and actions, to protect the families we serve and each other. We must never lose sight of those that are most vulnerable to this virus and do everything we can to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

Over the past several weeks, many of you have reached out to me expressing concerns with COVID-19. Specifically, the questions have been how to accommodate families and communities with the ban on 'Gatherings Larger than 10' as issued in Governor Stitt's Executive Order and the threat of caring for a patient that has died as a result of COVID-19.

I understand the difficulty in managing the ban on 'Gatherings Larger than 10.' Families want to come together with their closest friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc. to have the love and support as they prepare to say goodbye to their loved one. As hard as it is, please stay focused on protecting the family and your community by not allowing more than 10 people to attend a funeral, memorial service or visitation. I spoke with Governor Stitt Wednesday evening requesting specific language from him be integrated with the Executive Order to include funerals, memorial services and visitations. I am happy to include with this email an updated copy of the 'COVID-19 SAFER AT HOME' that specifically mentions 'Funerals' in the 'NO MORE THAN 10.' This was released by the Governor's office this morning. Please distribute this to your community to reinforce the expectation. The Oklahoma Funeral Board has been notified that some funeral homes are using the ban on 'Gatherings Larger than 10' as a competitive edge to attract families that are pushing to have larger ceremonies. The board will not tolerate this behavior and will be investigating each claim to explore further action.

Please keep in mind we care for roughly 38,000 deaths annually with 701 practicing funeral directors.

With the compounding affect, COVID-19 may impose on these numbers and you can clearly see we are in a vulnerable spot. Protecting your health and wellness is critically important as we prepare for the unknown. We will not have the benefit of funeral directors from other states volunteering their talents and skills as we have in the past. They will be focused on caring for their own state.

With respect to caring for the deceased House Bill 4041 requires hospitals, nursing homes and hospice care facilities to notify funeral directors when a patient dies with a communicable disease. This would include COVID-19. This is important for two reasons. One, it allows for additional precautions to be practiced; And two, it allows you to ask members of the family if they have had personal contact with the deceased during the time the patient was ill. If they did, I strongly recommend advising the family to self-quarantine as required by the CDC and our local officials. Arrangements need to be made with other family members or electronically while still complying with the CDC regulations. HB4041 passed the House 93 – 0 and is currently in the Senate for approval. I encourage you to contact your Senator and respectively ask for their support to pass this Bill. It will save lives.

This is an unprecedented time in our history. How we respond speaks volumes. To that point, please be assured that your Oklahoma Funeral Board remains committed to protecting our communities and you. We have a network of dedicated funeral professionals that are committed to serving others in a time of crisis. Thank you for all you do. It is appreciated very much. **Chad Vice, Funeral Board President**



COVID-19 **SAFER AT HOME**

ALERT

**AVOID GATHERINGS LARGER
THAN 10 THRU APRIL 30:**

**NO MORE THAN 10
INCLUDES:**



Religious
gatherings



Weddings and
celebration
ceremonies



Funerals

ALTERNATIVES INCLUDE:

- Facebook Live
- Postponing celebration events
- Family members only with 10 or less
- Drive by events, with attendees viewing from inside individual cars



OKLAHOMA
State Department
of Health



THD
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