



## ***SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS***

Affiliated with National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service  
SCFCL website: <http://www.scfcl.com>

### **Leader Training Guide**

#### **The Subject No One Wants to Talk About - Funerals**

##### **Objective:**

To provide information that will allow participants to become more knowledgeable of funeral regulations, terminology, and practices in order to make informed decisions for themselves and their loved ones.

##### **Lesson Overview/Introduction:**

At some time in our lives, most of us will make or assist in making funeral arrangements. This can mean making many decisions at a very difficult and emotional time. There are things you can do to help yourself. Be an informed consumer. Ask questions.

Today there are a variety of options to meet your financial needs and wishes. Be sure to discuss all available options before making a decision.

##### **Lesson:**

Why a funeral?

Funerals fill an important role for those mourning the loss of a loved one. By providing surviving family members and friends a caring, supportive environment in which to share thoughts and feelings about the death, funerals are the first step in the healing process.

What is a Funeral Director?

A funeral director is a licensed professional who specializes in all aspects associated with funeral service. Education and licensing requirements vary by state. When selecting a funeral director, choose one who is licensed and has a good reputation in the community. The National Funeral Directors Association member directory is a good place to start. Here are a few ways of how they assist.

- Provide support to the bereaved during initial stages of their grief
- Arrange and direct funeral ceremonies
- Arrange for removal of the deceased from the place of death
- Prepare the body according to the wishes of the survivors & requirements of the law
- Secure information for legal documents
- File death certificates and other legal papers
- Assist survivors with details for filing claims for death benefits
- Help individuals adapt to changes in their lives following a death through post-death counseling and support group activities

## Funeral Service Options and pricing:

There are a number of services available to families. Each has a different price depending on the level of service. Also, the casket and vault selections are individually priced. Typical services offered by most funeral homes are:

Traditional funeral services

Cremation services

    Traditional cremation service

    Service of remembrance (cremation with memorial service)

    Direct cremation (without service or ceremony)

Memorial services

## Advance Funeral Planning

No one likes to think about funerals, but an increasing number of adults find that preparing for the inevitable is a wise decision. Planning one's funeral in advance allows individuals to do their homework and select a funeral home that will meet the emotional and financial needs of their family.

Planning funerals in advance allows individuals to plan a memorable funeral service that reflects their wishes. It allows families to plan celebrations of life as unique as the individual being remembered. Also, pre-planning cremation in SC and signing your own cremation papers make it irrevocable by any other family members.

Planning one's funeral in advance does not mean one must prepay for the funeral. Many people who preplan their funeral also choose to prepay because it will alleviate the financial burden for their families.

## Personalizing a Funeral

A funeral is more than a way to say goodbye; it is an opportunity to celebrate the life of someone special. The following questions that can help you decide how to personalize a service.

What did the person like to do?

What was the person like as an individual?

What was the person like as a professional?

Was the person spiritual?

Was the person proud of their heritage?

## Thinking about Cremation?

As more people are choosing cremation, funeral service professionals are striving to give consumers a true sense of what their many options are for a funeral service. Cremation does not limit your choices for a service; it actually increases your options. You can save money by joining a cremation society.

These are some questions and answers that will help explain what cremation is.

1. When after death can cremation take place?

Because cremation is an irreversible process and because the process itself will eliminate any ability to determine exact cause of death, many states require that each cremation be

authorized by the coroner or medical examiner. Some states have specific minimum time limits that must lapse before cremation may take place.

2. Is any other preparation required prior to cremation?  
It is essential that pacemakers and other medical devices be removed prior to cremation. In addition any special mementos, such as jewelry, should be removed before the casket or container is transferred to the crematory.
3. Is it true that the bones are crushed after cremation? I've heard you don't get ashes back – what do you get?  
A complete cremation is a two-step process. Firstly, the actual exposure of the deceased to several hours of intense heat and flame; after which the remains are mostly ash except for certain bone fragments, then the entire remaining ash and fragment volume is gathered and run through a processor, creating a uniform powder-like texture.
4. Is embalming necessary for cremation?  
No. In most cases, it is your choice.
5. Is a casket required?  
No. For sanitary reasons, ease of placement and dignity, many crematories require that the deceased be cremated in a combustible, leak proof, rigid, covered container. This does not need to be a casket.
6. Are there special cremation caskets?  
There is a choice of very affordable cremation caskets that are completely combustible.
7. Can a casket be rented instead of purchased when choosing cremation?  
Many funeral homes offer a hardwood ceremonial casket for viewing or funeral services prior to cremation.
8. Can I bring my own urn?  
Yes. It would be advisable to discuss this situation with your cremation provider prior to the cremation.
9. Is cremation a substitution for a funeral?  
No, cremation is simply a method of preparing human remains for final disposition.
10. Do I have to make different funeral arrangements if I chose cremation?  
It depends entirely on how you wish to commemorate a life. You might choose to have a funeral service before the cremation, a memorial service at the time of cremation or after the cremation with the urn present, or a committal service at the final disposition of cremated remains. Funeral or memorial services can be held in a place of worship, a funeral home or in a crematory chapel.
11. Can I scatter the remains on private property?  
Yes, with permission of the owner.
12. If I am being cremated, can I be buried with my spouse even if he or she was in a casket?  
Yes – depending upon the cemetery's policy, you may be able to save a grave space by having the cremains buried on top of the casketed remains or your spouse, or utilize the space provided next to him/her. Many cemeteries allow for multiple cremated remains to be interred in a single grave space.

### Green Funerals

As with the concept of “green” in general, green in funeral service means practicing environmental consciousness and being eco-friendly. It encompasses green funeral homes, green funerals, and natural burial.

A green funeral incorporates environmentally-friendly options. A green funeral may include any or all of the following: a small gathering in a natural setting, use of only recycled paper products, locally-grown organic flowers, carpooling, organic food, no embalming or embalming with formaldehyde-free products, the use of sustainable biodegradable clothing, shroud or casket, and natural or green burial.

In natural burial, the body is buried, without embalming, in a natural setting. Any shroud or casket that is used must be biodegradable, nontoxic, and of sustainable material. Traditional standing headstones are not permitted. Instead, flat rocks, plants or trees may serve as grave markers. In South Carolina, there is one green cemetery, Ramsey Creek Preserve, located in Westminster, SC.

#### Meeting Consumer Needs Through Technology

Many funeral homes now have their own website and display their products and services. In addition they can help families create memorial videos which include photographs accompanied by music. These can be shown at visitation or funeral service and can be a keepsake. Some even offer live online broadcast of the funeral service to accommodate those distant loved ones unable to attend the service. These also can be made into a DVD for the family to keep.

#### Lesson Summary:

While all of us prefer not to think about dying, much less talk about it, we all know that the day will come when we have to plan someone's service. Many of you already have experienced this event. Today there are many options for funeral services. Do not assume you know what someone will want or think that because you have discussed it briefly, that you do know. When it comes to the many decisions that have to be made, it is best to have the information in writing and update it periodically. No one wants their family to be left wondering "what did he or she want"? And when you are unsure what the wishes of the deceased are, it is easy to go over budget during the time of grief. Make your wishes known!

#### Suggested Activities:

Visit funeral homes in your area to determine the best fit for the wishes and needs of you and your family. Ask for their funeral planning guide so that you can become familiar with the types of information needed prior to a service. Sit down with your spouse, family member, or friend and together complete the funeral planning guide.

**Suggested Materials:** Visit the National Funeral Directors Association website to gain more information. [www.nfda.org](http://www.nfda.org) and NFDA funeral service help line: 800-228-6332 (free service).

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