

Step-by-Step Do-It-Yourself Funeral

To do BEFORE a death:

1) Our “[funeral planning worksheet](#)” at www.utahfunerals.org on the “Plan Ahead” page may be helpful as it brings up options to consider.

2) Designate a **family member or friend** to act as the Dispositioner. The Dispositioner: goes to the Health Department to apply for a Death Certificate (DC) and Burial Transit Permit (BTP) and attends the body to the place of final disposition (cemetery or crematory). The dispositioner should be your most determined, focused friend or family member instead of the tempting offers of well-meaning professionals.

You may use the [Agent to Control Disposition Form.pdf](#) for the dying person to assign a person (if it's other than the primary next-of-kin) to act as the dispositioner.

3) Go to <https://vitalrecords.health.utah.gov/death>, scroll down the page to the File A Death Record and click on “**the death record processing form.**” to download the “*Dispositioner Worksheet for completing a Death Record*” (it requires download because the State made it a Word doc). Don't wait to start filling it out. The form helps you gather the information that will be needed by the Office of Vital Records located at the Health Dept of the county where the death will occur. (Make note of their open hours. Not all are open daily. Often there is more than one branch in each county, with different open-hours).

Call and inform the Registrar that you plan to “File a Death Record” as a dispositioner instead of hiring a funeral home.

Thankfully some Registrars let you bring in the completed “*Dispositioner Worksheet...*” BEFORE death occurs so they can start the data entry and check your id as the acting dispositioner. This way you will only need to call with the “time of death” and make only one trip back down there to pick up your permits and pay. This is especially helpful when death occurs over a weekend or after hours.

4) Acquire a **casket**: Build one, buy one or delegate someone else to do so. To facilitate rolling the casket easily in/out of a vehicle, find a **thick cardboard or PVC tube**.

To make initial transport of a body from a care facility easier:

"A leakproof container" is stated in the law as being required to transport a body.

Leakproof does not mean a box or bag that can be turned into a swimming pool.

Leakproof means you won't get bodily fluids trailing you wherever you bring the body.

The goal is to make transport through public spaces modest, leak-free & smell-free.

(The sooner in the first 24 hrs that [cooling the body](#) begins the less likely there will be any smell.)

To make initial transport of a body from a care facility easier, bring:

-[A body board with handles](#) (or a casket). Ask to use the facilities' gurney if you don't want to carry the board or casket through their facility, or if you don't have enough people to carry it loaded.

-Two people should be enough to slide a board or casket into a vehicle if you use one or two 2" thick cardboard or pvc tubes about 18" long. Place the casket on the tube(s) and the loaded board/casket will roll right in.

-One sheet and chux pad from home for under the body. Here is a 3 min video demonstrating using a sheet [to lift a body as a team](#). A sheet is nice because if seepage begins it can be identified and bound immediately whereas a plastic body bag can spread leaking fluids all over the body, as well as build up heat and smells.

-Another sheet from home to drape over the body when carrying the body through public spaces.

-Plastic sheeting for floor of vehicle if worried about seepage (unexpected death, recent surgery, obesity).

If picking up from the Medical Examiner (ME) the body will be in a commercial body bag. At the ME's you will drive your vehicle (and casket) right into their transport bay. They do not want you to open the bag or have any open casket viewing after an autopsy. However you will still need to keep the [body cold](#) until final disposition (cremation or burial).

5) **Call a cemetery** or crematory to let them know who will be acting as the Dispositioner. The Sextant should inform you of any cemetery policies & procedures you must comply with. If you prefer burial in a **non-commercial or rural cemetery**, get permission from a contact person for that cemetery. For a list of those in Utah go to <https://history.utah.gov/cemeteries/> click on "find a cemetery".

If you prefer burial on **your own private rural property** there are no State regulations in Utah but there may be county ordinances. There are no cities that allow burial within city limits. For more details see the cemetery page at UtahFunerals.org or email FCAofUtah@gmail.com

6) If a program is desired for a Funeral or Memorial service there are lots of templates online. You can write it up and insert pictures beforehand (leaving the date of death blank)

7) **Gather items to take care of a body** after death. A dead body is treated with the same modesty and dignity as any live person who is bed-ridden.

How-to move a body, prevention for seepage of body fluids and other logistics:

<http://www.crossings.net/resources.html> the 1st paragraph follow the link **“to view a free summary on home funeral care.”**

YouTube videos: [Moving the Body](#) (3min), [Part 2 — Washing the Head, Face, and Mouth](#) (11min), [Part 3 — Washing the Body](#) (9min, the body should be draped modestly as you would a live bedridden person, but they didn't for the video), [Part 4 — Dressing the Body](#) (6min includes closing eyes & mouth), [Part 5 — Final Preparations](#) (8min includes casketing or wrapping in a shroud) **In reading/watching those primers remember you don't have to do things you find uncomfortable. You can alter instructions to fit your needs.**

More helpful links at: <https://www.utahfunerals.org/diy-funerals>.

Within a couple hours of death there are marked signs of stiffening of the body, called rigor mortis. So the first couple of hours is an opportunity to close the eyes and mouth, dress the body if desired, and place arms and hands where you want them. After 24-48 hrs you get another chance as the muscles begin to relax again (which is a sign of decomposition). Keeping the body cool slows down these processes. See [COOLING A BODY](#), summarized here:

- About 16 lbs of dry ice/**day** are needed to keep an average adult between 33 to 40 degrees. Dry ice is purchased at most grocery stores. Using thick gloves, wrap the dry ice in a **paper bag** then **cloth** and place about the body. A room/or vehicle must be ventilated because of the carbon dioxide dry ice releases.
- Another option is re-freezable ice packs.
- When the temp outside is below 40 degrees, an open window in a separate room may substitute for dry ice. Keeping a thermometer in the casket will give you some peace of mind.

8) Doctors have 3 days to sign the Death Certificate. The body can't be moved until you have that (and the burial transit permit which only requires another short electronic review handled by the Vital Records Registrar, see step 2 “after death”). If the signing Doctor is on the Electronic Death Entry Network (EDEN) it is usually faster to get the Doctor to sign than if the paperwork has to be brought to the Doctor.

Let the Doctor/Hospice/Hospital/Vital Records Registrar know as-soon-as-possible that “Family are acting as their own dispositioner”. The Doctor/Hospice/Hospital/Registrar may not have a clear written policy on how to deal with you. Therefore confused and scared employees may need some runway to get oriented and be helpful. **Tips to make initial transport of a body from a care facility easier:**

[-What to bring and why](#)

-Ways_hospital_staff_can_support_home_funeral_families

To do AFTER a death:

1) When an Expected Death occurs: at home is the best situation- Call the Hospice you are working with or the attending physician (if seen within 30 days), otherwise call the non-emergency phone # of your local law enforcement agency. Hospital death: Let the Doctor and nurses know asap (even before death) that you will NOT be using a funeral director. You will need to get the Death Certificate and Burial Transit Permit at the Health Dept: Office of Vital Records, in the county where death occurred, BEFORE moving the body.

If Unexpected death occurs call emergency law enforcement. If you are not sure if the person is dead call 911 for an ambulance.

2) **Go to** the Vital Records office of **the health department** of the county where death occurred. If you haven't started to fill out the Vital Records form yet, go to the State website

<https://vitalrecords.health.utah.gov/death> to finish that now. Bring with you:

- a) The completed Death Record Form
- b) Your i.d. (you are the "Dispositioner")
- c) The ability to pay \$300-\$600 (**Death Certificate data entry fee**: most counties \$100 during business hrs (Utah county charges according to how long it takes the registrar to enter the data or \$75, a couple counties don't charge extra (some counties supposedly charge \$300 for weekend/holiday service), **Burial Transit Permit**: \$157, **1st death certificate**: \$30, **Extra copies** of the Death Cert: \$10),

You will want the death certificate sooner than the legal 5 days because, though a funeral director can transport a body and arrange publication of an obituary; you, **without the DC and BTP permit** in hand, cannot do either of those things.

3) **Prepare the body** for casketing (see step #7 instruction and videos in "Before Death" Section).

4) **Plan with clergy** (if you desire their participation) & **Secure venues** (even a standard room may be sufficient) for:

- viewing (body is visible) or visitation (body is not visible: closed casket, or body not present)
- funeral (body is present) or memorial (body is not present)
- Final disposition (burial or cremation): Notify **cemetery or crematory** as far ahead as possible.

5) Acquire a **vehicle**: By now you may have received the Death Certificate and Burial Transit Permit needed to move the body. A **van** (with back seats down) or **pick-up truck**, or even an SUV are ideal options for transporting a body in a casket.

6) Finalize **Death Notice** (sometimes free) or **Obituary** (typically \$400 to \$1500) and email it to the newspaper with the Death Certificate. Some papers allow you to publish a minimum obit, adding more words and photos after the funeral for free.

Online Obituary sites help you build, share and host a permanent obituary:

-<https://www.obituare.com/> for \$99.

-This Obituary website hosts obits and can also send it to be published in ANY newspaper in the country: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/utah> for \$149 & up

7) **Veterans' Flag** (www.cem.va.gov) To get one fill out form 27-2008 at:

<https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/burial-flags/> After death bring it to the post office or

Regional VA office to receive the flag. Honorably discharged veterans get free burial at a Veterans National Cemeteries which includes grave, opening and closing, marker, and setting. If the cemetery requires you purchase a grave liner (aka vault) for the casket there are local dealers who will sell it wholesale to those bypassing a funeral home.

8) **Delegate** a person to notify friends & family of the finalized place and time of funeral/memorial & disposition. Check for accuracy of ceremony address & cemetery address!

9) Finalize **Funeral Program**. Find a template online, download, edit & print one. Have a couple people proofread, then print the quantity you need.

10) **Transport body** to the place of ceremony. Use a thick cardboard tube to slide the casket easily in/out of a vehicle. Note: many SUV's can fit a casket.

Place a table for the casket to rest on (when choosing a table consider the weight of the casket & if a tablecloth will be needed). You don't need a casket dolly to move the casket through a building. Since small doorways can be awkward, Pallbearers should practice before people start arriving.

Utah Funeral Directors are required by their licensure to embalm before they take a body across state lines. **Dispositioners are NOT subject to Licensure Rules!** Don't be bullied!

Several states require either embalming *or* a sealed casket **if** the body is shipped **by common carrier** (such as plane, or train). However, this is rarely enforced and funeral homes in those states

will routinely ship unembalmed bodies (Jewish or Muslim clients, for example). Remember: The CDC has consistently maintained that embalming is [not a method of protecting public health](#).

FD =Funeral Director

States Where Families Must Hire a FD

	FD sign, certify, or file death certificate	FDs must perform body removal or transport	Denies the rights of next of kin to perform any duties beyond home care	Only FDs are issued burial/transit permits	Only FDs and Medical Examiners can issue burial/transit permits	FDs must supervise final disposition
<i>Connecticut</i>						
<i>Florida</i>						
<i>Illinois</i>						
<i>Iowa</i>						
<i>Indiana</i>						
<i>Louisiana</i>						
<i>New York</i>						
<i>Michigan</i>						
<i>Nebraska</i>						
<i>New Jersey</i>						

2023 Chart by Lee Webster NH Funeral Resources