

Bereavement Resource Guide

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center



It's how we **treat people.**



MedStar Health



MedStar Health

Dear Family Members and Friends,

The staff at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center would like to extend our deepest sympathy to you and your family at this time of loss. We cherish the time we have shared with you in caring for your loved one. While they will continue to be remembered by our staff, you will also be in our thoughts.

Times of grief can be challenging, and people handle it differently. You may have questions about what to do next. This booklet was designed provide some practical help and resources for the days and weeks ahead.

We want to assure you that we are available to help support you in the days ahead. If you ever wish to talk about your loss or share special memories of your family member, or if you have any additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact our Patient Relations Department at 301-877-4279

With our sympathy,

The staff at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center

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What to do when a loved one dies

Whether a death is expected or unexpected, the hours, days and weeks after can be a disorienting, and an emotionally and physically exhausting time. Additionally, the process of laying someone to rest can be overwhelming. This list is meant to provide information and guidance based on what others have told us about their experience.

Some tasks will need to be completed quickly; for others you may have more time. Seek support where you can. Not all information will apply to every situation.

Before leaving the hospital

- Say goodbye: For some people, spending time with the body can be helpful in saying goodbye, and for others this may feel too difficult. If you desire to spend time with your loved one, talk to their team about it. In some rare circumstances, this may not be possible.
- Find someone to take you home or meet you at home, so you will have support.
- Collect personal belongings from the patient's room.
- Please be aware that the body can stay in the hospital morgue for up to 72 hours after a death.
- The death certificate will travel with the body to the funeral home, and they will provide you copies of this.
- Infinite Legacy (an organ and tissue donation agency) may contact you to discuss organ, tissue, or cornea donation.

When you get home

- Take time to rest, eat, and gather your thoughts.
- Contact a funeral home or crematorium (see page 7) . They will assist in coordinating all arrangements, beginning with the transportation of your loved one's body from the hospital morgue.
- If your loved one's death falls under the jurisdiction of the medical examiner, your funeral director will contact the medical examiner to release the body.

Tasks for the days and weeks ahead

- If applicable, notify agent under Power of Attorney.
- Alert the executor of your loved one's Last Will and Testament.
- Contact the deceased's employer, if applicable.



- Notify religious, fraternal and civic organizations that your loved one was a member of.
- Notify your attorney regarding probate of the estate.
- Remove any valuables from the deceased's home, secure the residence and take steps to make the home appear to be occupied (for example, use of lamp timers).
- Arrange for the disposal of any perishables left in the deceased's home-such as food, refrigerated items and existing refuse.
- Consider any special need of the household, such as cleaning, babysitting, children's carpool arrangements, pet sitting etc., which might be done by extended family or friends.
- Alert the post office to forward the deceased's mail and newspapers.
- This is some of the information about your loved one that you need for the death certificate:
 - Birth date
 - Social security number
 - Birthplace
 - Father's and mother's name
 - Education
 - Veteran discharge or claim number
- Determine the number of copies of the death certificate that you will need. The funeral home can offer you assistance (general rule of thumb is a dozen).

What to do within one month of the death and after

- If there is not a will, you will need to locate a lawyer to determine next steps, based on your state of residency.
- Consult with an attorney about probate.
- Meet with an accountant to discuss estate taxes.

- Locate and/or obtain other important paperwork of the deceased that will be necessary for the settlement of their estate:
 - Real estate deeds and titles
 - Stock certificates
 - Loan paperwork
 - Bank and retirement account statements - Last four years of tax returns
- Check all life and casualty insurance and death benefits, including Social Security, credit union, employment, trade union, fraternal and military.
 - Note: Even if you do not feel up to this task right away, ask for help from friends or family. You will not want to miss any deadlines for benefits.
- If your loved one was a veteran, inquire about benefits you may be entitled to through the VA. Please call 800-827-1000.
- If the death was accidental, verify which benefits are available on existing insurance policies.
- Contact the Social Security Administration 800-772-1213 and other government offices that may have been making payments to the decedent. If the decedent was your spouse, inquire about your eligibility for new benefits.
- The funeral home will prepare Social Security form SSA 721, but you will need to contact Social Security to ensure the number assigned to your loved one is retired. This will help prevent the possibility of identity theft.
- If Social Security checks are set for automatic deposit, notify the bank of the death.
- Notify the Registrar of Voters.
- Notify all three credit-reporting agencies and obtain a current copy of the deceased's credit report.
- Check all debts and installment payments, including credit cards. If there will be a delay in meeting payments, consult with creditors and ask for more time before the payments are due.
- If the deceased person was living alone, notify utilities and landlord.
- If the deceased's home is unoccupied, cancel unnecessary home services, such as newspaper delivery, cable services, etc.
- Cancel deceased's prescriptions.
- Contact the Department of Motor Vehicles to cancel deceased's driver's license and transfer titles of all registered vehicles.
- Change ownerships of assets and lines of credit.
- Update beneficiaries on your life insurance policies, if necessary.

Options for body disposition

Funerals, burials, and cremations

Many families select a funeral home they have used in the past. If you or your family have not previously used the services of a local funeral home, you may wish to check with friends, clergy or other family members for suggestions. There is also a list of funeral homes and direct cremation centers starting below. This list is by no means exhaustive and does not represent official endorsement by MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center.

Domestic & international funerals

If you plan to hold your loved one's funeral or memorial service outside of the immediate area, ask your local funeral director to contact a funeral director in the city of your preferred destination. Upon receiving your written consent, both funeral directors will work together to arrange the transport of your loved one to your preferred destination.

If your loved one's burial takes place in another country, your funeral director will need to contact that country's embassy to ensure they follow all rules and regulations for transportation.

Cremation

Cremation is a method of body disposition that is an alternative to traditional burial in a coffin or casket. Cremation reduces a body to ash by exposing it to very high temperatures within a large furnace. Most funeral homes offer cremation services, and direct cremation services are also available, usually at a lower cost.

Direct Cremation

- **Maryland Cremation Services**
408 Headquarters Drive, #10
Millersville, MD 21108
P 410-960-7525
- **Cremation Society of Maryland**
301 Frederick Rd
Catonsville, MD 21228
P 410-788-1800
- **Cremation and Funeral Alternatives**
7527 Harford Road
Baltimore, MD 21234
P 410-321-1005

Key:

☪ Muslim Funeral Services Offered

S Spanish-speaking staff available

☆ Jewish Funeral Services Offered

C Provide Cremation Services

Funeral Homes

Maryland, Prince George's County

C	Fort Lincoln	3401 Bladensburg Rd Brentwood, MD 20722 www.dignitymemorial.com/funeral-homes/maryland/brentwood/fort-lincoln-funeral-home/9737	301-864-5090
C	JB Jenkins	7474 Landover Rd Hyattsville, MD 20785 www.jbjenkinsfuneralhome.com	301-322-2300
C	March Life	7601 Sandy Spring Rd Laurel, MD 20707 www.marshallmarchfh.com/about-us/tour-our-facilities	301-490-1550
	Kalas, George P. Funeral Home	6160 Oxon Hill Rd Oxon Hill, MD 20745 kalasfuneralhomes.com	301-567-9424
S	Pope	5538 Marlboro Pike Forestville, MD 20747 www.popefh.com/	301-568-4100
S C	Gasch's Funeral Home	4739 Baltimore Ave Hyattsville, MD 20781 www.gaschs.com	301-927-6100
	Hodges & Edwards Funeral Home	3910 Silver Hill Rd Hillcrest Heights, MD 20746 www.hefuneralh.com	301-899-0687
S	Strickland Funeral Service	6500 Allentown Rd Temple Hills, MD 20748 www.stricklandfuneralservices.com	301-449-0400

Washington DC			
☾ C	Universal Mortuary	411 Kennedy St NW Washington, DC 20011 www.umifunerals.com	202-723-1075
C	Johnson & Jenkins	716 Kennedy St NW Washington DC 20011 www.johnsonandjenkinsfh.com	202-882-8800
✠	Torchinsky Hebrew Funeral Home, Inc.	254 Carroll St NW Washington, DC 20012 www.torchinsky.com	202-541-1001
	Stewart	4001 Benning Rd NE Washington DC 20019 www.stewartfuneralhome.com	202-399-3600
Virginia			
S C	Everly-Wheatley	1500 W Braddock Rd Alexandria, VA 22302 www.everlywheatley.com/	703-998-9200
S C	Adams-Green Funeral Home	721 Elden St. Herndon, VA 20170 www.adamsgreen.com	703-437-1764
C	Advent Funeral & Cremation	7211 Lee Hwy Falls Church, VA 22046 www.afterall.com	703-241-7402
C	Jefferson Funeral Chapel	5755 Castlewellan Dr. Alexandria, VA 22315 www.jeffersonfuneralchapel.com	703-971-7400
S C	Arlington Funeral Home	4510 Wilson Blvd Arlington, VA 22203 www.dignitymemorial.com	703-522-1441
✠ ☾ S C	National Funeral Home	7482 Lee Hwy Falls Church, VA 22042 www.dignitymemorial.com	703-560-4400

Funeral costs

Because funerals can be expensive, there are federal regulations designed to protect you from overpaying. The Funeral Rule, enforced by the Federal Trade Commission, makes it easier for you to choose only those goods and services that you want and to pay for only those you select. The funeral provider must give you a general price list containing the cost of each funeral item and service offered. You have the right to select funeral items that you want and can afford.

Financial assistance

Maryland

The Burial Assistance Program provides limited assistance to help with funeral expenses of deceased recipients of assistance programs when their families cannot afford funeral costs. Please contact the local departments of Social Services in the county where the individual resided. In Prince George's County, the number is 301-209-5000 and the statewide number is 1-800-332-6347.

District of Columbia

The Department of Health's Burial Assistance Program offers assistance to low-income Washington, D.C., residents only. Please contact the Department of Human Services Burial Unit at 202-698-4112.

Virginia

For more information on burial assistance programs in Virginia, please contact Virginia's Department of Health Office of Human Resources at 804-864-7100, or Virginia's Department of Human Resource Management at 804-225-2237.

Veterans Assistance

The Veteran Administration (VA) pays a burial and plot allowance for eligible veterans at no cost to the veteran's family. Please contact the National Cemetery Administration at 202-632-8035.

Social Security Administration

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program does not pay for funeral expenses. However, a surviving spouse or child may receive a special lump-sum death payment of \$255 if they meet certain requirements. Please contact your local social security office or call 800-772-1213.

3. Grief and mourning

Grief is a normal reaction to the death of a loved one, but few of us are prepared for the grief that death brings. The process of mourning is one that we will all go through at some point in our lives, but there are some important things to remember about the process.

We all grieve in our own way. There is no right or wrong way to experience grief. It is an intensely personal experience based on your relationship with the person, your personality, and the circumstances of the death. Two people experiencing the same death may have very different reactions. Allow for different reactions among your family and friends and make time and space for your own healing.

There is no time frame for grief. Grief generally lasts longer than our society recognizes and may not fit a prescribed format or timeline. Different faith traditions may provide guidance for the period of mourning, but it is not uncommon to feel grief outside of these allotted periods. Grief may come and go, and it may be felt more acutely during special occasions, anniversaries, and holidays. Attempts to hurry through the grieving process or to push it away may not be effective and can sometimes prolong the process. Be patient with yourself and your loved ones as you go through this difficult process.

You will get through this. Although the process may seem long, your grief will change and develop over time. Eventually, you will make a place for the loss in your life and start to discover a new and different future.

What is normal grief?

Signs and Symptoms:

Although everyone's experience of grief is uniquely their own, it can be comforting to know there are certain feelings and behaviors that are common to everyone and reflect the normal range of reactions to grief. There are a wide range of experiences that are felt by people after a loss including:

- Feeling shock or denial.
- Feeling numb or as if you are just "going through the motions."
- Feeling tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest.
- An empty feeling in the stomach and/or a loss of appetite.
- Headaches or stomach aches.
- Feelings of anger or guilt.
- Feelings of confusion, frustration and being quick to argue.
- Restlessness and difficulty with concentration.

- Forgetfulness.
- Difficulty sleeping or feeling like you want to sleep all the time.
- Mood swings.
- Crying at unexpected times.
- Needing to tell, re-tell and remember things about the loved one and the death experience.
- Not being able to talk about the person at all.
- Dreaming about your loved one and/or dreaming about the details of the death.
- Withdrawing from friends and not wanting to go out.
- Worrying that the pain and grief will never go away.

What can I do?

There are things you can do to start to heal and that may help you and your family feel better. However, it is important to remember that everyone grieves in their own time and in their own way. Here are a few tips:

- Accept support from family and friends.
- Do not be afraid to feel your grief, as it plays an important role in healing.
- Look at pictures of your loved one and reflect on happy times you shared.
- Take care of yourself physically. Maintain a healthy diet, exercise, get plenty of rest and get checkups when needed.
- Continue hobbies that have been helpful in the past. Consider keeping a journal of your thoughts and feelings as you move through the grieving process.
- Avoid alcohol, drugs, tranquilizers, and other harmful substances. Medications should only be used when prescribed by your doctor.
- Do something that memorializes your loved one: light a candle on the anniversary of their death or on special occasions, plant a tree, set up a memorial fund, create a memory book, think of family traditions, and find ways to integrate their memory in ways that honor their life, rather than highlight their absence.
- Eventually, the goal may be to integrate your loved one into your life in a different way as you begin to define your new normal.

Getting Help

Feelings of grief and loss are natural reactions to the death of a loved one, and they come at different times and in different ways for everyone. However, if you or your loved ones are having a difficult time with grieving, feelings of being trapped, feeling unbearable pain, feeling that you have no reason to live, increased use of alcohol or drugs, isolating from family and friends, intrusive thoughts of wanting to hurt yourself or someone else or depression, please consider talking to a mental health professional. You may also find

support through your religious community, the funeral home, hospice organizations, or other family service organizations where you live. There are some contacts listed under Bereavement Support Services in this booklet.

If you feel like you might be in immediate crisis, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 988.

Children and Grief

Caregivers are often unsure of how much to involve children during or after the death of a loved one. Your decision may depend on the age of the child, the circumstances of the death and your cultural or religious beliefs. However, it is important to realize that children will mourn the death of a loved one. The more family and friends can involve children in the process, the more likely children are to grieve in a healthy way. The following steps may be helpful to parents, teachers, and other caregivers as they support children who have experienced a loss:

- Children should be included in what is happening. Do your best to speak openly and honestly about what has happened. Keep explanations simple and age appropriate.
- Avoid euphemisms like “went to sleep” or “lost” as this can be confusing or scary to a child and they might think that something similar will happen to them.
- Encourage children to ask questions, even if the questions might be difficult to hear.
- Give children the opportunity to tell you what grief feels like for them.
- Children often think that death is their fault and will need reassurance that this is not true.
- Let children know that it is okay to cry.
- Just like with adults, there is no right way for children to grieve. Allow for children to experience grief in their own way and on their own timeline.
- All children in the same group may not have the same understanding of death. Try to tailor your explanations to each individual child based on their needs.
- Don’t be surprised if your children begin playing and having their toys die. Play is a child’s way of working through their feelings and this new concept of death.
- Provide consistency and routine as best as possible as this helps children feel safe and secure during an unpredictable time.
- Make sure your child’s school is aware of the death, as teachers and counselors can provide an additional level of support.

Making Memories

While children might not have the language to express themselves verbally, it might be helpful to have alternative outlets for children to express grief, whether that be through art, play, sports or any other methods that allow for expressions of grief. Some activities to consider:

- Make a card for the person who died. Decorate it with drawings and stickers and messages of love.
- Help your children create a collage of pictures of them and their loved one.
- Encourage your child to write a poem or a song.
- Create a storybook and have your child write a story about their experience.
- Discuss with your child how to observe anniversaries, special holidays, and birthdays. Think about ways to honor your loved one's life, rather than highlighting their absence.

Grief

There is no set timeline for a child's grief and no right or wrong way to grieve. Children's responses to grief depend on a number of factors including their developmental level and their capacity to understand the situation. Normal grief may be expressed by a range of reactions, including but not limited to:

- Feeling sad, angry and/or guilty.
- Showing no feelings or appearing detached.
- Regressive behaviors such as sleeping in parents' bed, bedwetting for young children, needing to be rocked or held or difficulty separating from parents or caregivers.
- Explosive anger, acting out or impulsivity.
- Withdrawal from friends or family.
- Violent play or acting out death.
- Eating and sleeping disturbances.
- Difficulty concentrating, impaired memory and decision-making and confusion.
- Asking the same questions over and over as they attempt to process and understand what has happened.

However, if you notice that your child's grief symptoms last for a long time or appear to be affecting them physically or emotionally, it might be helpful to follow up with a grief counselor or your child's school social worker.

Grief Support Services

Local hospice agencies provide bereavement support to members of the community regardless of whether their loved one died under hospice care for 13 months after a death. You can reach out to your local hospice agency and ask about their bereavement support services.

Some faith communities offer grief and bereavement support, and you can seek out grief counseling through your health insurance or EAP. Below is also a list of nonprofits who offer grief services, this list is not exhaustive.

Roberta's House provides children, teens and adults grief support via support groups. Visit <https://robertashouse.org/> or call 301-880-5100 for more information.

Wendt Center for Loss and Healing provides grief and trauma therapy to children and adults. Programs include individual therapy, group therapy, and a spectrum of services for children and teens. For more information visit <https://www.wendtcenter.org/> or call 202-624-0010.

Compassionate Friends provides support to families experiencing the loss of a child. For more information, please call 630-990-0010 or visit CompassionateFriends.org.

Bereavement Camps for Children and Teens

Camp Nabi annual weekend overnight camp for any child ages 6 to 18 who has experienced the death of a loved one. Sponsored by Hospice of the Chesapeake details, call 1-888-501-7077 or email griefinfo@chesapeakelifecenter.org.

Camp Sunrise is an annual summer camp for K-12 graders who have experienced the death of a loved one in the last two years. This camp offers many forms of creative grief exploration, group support, and tangible coping skills for application. Call 301-994-3023 for more information.

Camp Erin a bereavement camp for children and teens, ages 6-17, who have experienced the death of someone close to them. Locations in Baltimore, Gaithersburg, and in the Washington DC area. Contact: 410-435-0500, elunanetwork.org/camps-programs/camp-erin

Camp Me Too! Support groups and day camps offered for bereaved children and teens. Contact: 410-252-4500
2300 Dulaney Valley Road, Timonium, MD 21093

Camp Kangaroo: A bereavement camp experience offered free of charge to children in the community who have suffered the death of a loved one. Participants receive grief education and emotional support combined with fun camp activities.
Contact: 888-523-6000,
5457 Twin Knolls Road, Suite 100, Columbia, MD 21045

Additional information

Crime Victim Resources

Crime Victim Compensation Program (CVCP)
Maryland - 888-679-9347
District of Columbia - 202-879-4216
Virginia - 800-552-4007

Legal Services Resources

Maryland Legal Aid - 410-951-7777

Medical Records

Sometimes families may need a copy of their loved one's medical chart. Depending on your relationship to the deceased, you will need different sources of identification which may include a copy of the death certificate, marriage license, a letter of administration or power of attorney. You can speak with the medical records department: 301-877-4524.

Death Certificate

The death certificate is an official document that will certify the cause and manner of the death of your loved one. This document will be prepared by the attending physician and given to the funeral director for completion. The original death certificate is kept by the local health department in the jurisdiction where the death occurred. You will need original death certificates for most legal transactions; a general rule of thumb is to request a dozen copies. The funeral home will help in obtaining death certificates (you may want to inquire how much copies will cost). Next of kin and others legally entitled to obtain the death certificate may also obtain copies from the Maryland Division of Vital Records or your local health department.

Hospital Autopsy

An autopsy is the examination of tissue and organs from a deceased person. This examination is conducted by a trained physician (pathologist) to determine the cause of death and evaluate any disease or injury that may be present. During the examination, proper care is taken to honor and respect the deceased person.

Autopsies are not performed at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center. If a death falls under the jurisdiction of the medical examiner (see below), then an autopsy will be coordinated by the medical examiner in Baltimore.

Some families may also request an autopsy, however if not medically indicated by the physician or medical examiner, there will be an out-of-pocket cost that can exceed ten thousand or more dollars. The National Autopsy Service can assist in finding a local service 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. They can be reached at 1-800-343-2135.

Medical Examiner Cases

A medical examiner is a physician appointed by law to determine the cause and manner of death for certain circumstances which are dictated by state code, such as deaths from violence, overdose of drugs, unexplained deaths, deaths that pose a public health concern, etc. Deaths under the jurisdiction of the medical examiner are called medical examiner cases. Hospital staff will inform you if the death of your loved one falls under the jurisdiction of the medical examiner's office. If so, the funeral home can assist with coordinating release of the body and completion of the death certificate with the medical examiner's office.

You can use these note pages to jot down important information that will help you during this journey.

We dedicate this booklet in honor of the families who entrusted their loved ones to us and to the exceptional care team members of nurses, physicians, and support services staff.

It's how we **treat people.**



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