

## **The need for planning**

Plans made for funeral arrangements help survivors make decisions and control funeral costs. Grieving families without plans are ill prepared for quick selection of funeral goods and services or decisions about funeral or memorial ceremonies. Pressed for decisions, they often buy more costly and elaborate funerals than they would if plans were in place and family discussions had identified what was wanted.

## **The Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Finger Lakes, Inc.**

The FCAFL is a non-profit tax-exempt organization that serves the southern Finger Lakes region, informing members and the public about funeral planning, practices and costs.

The Alliance is run by volunteers and financed entirely by tax-deductible donations. It is a member of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance, Inc., a federation of nonprofit consumer information organizations (website: [www.funerals.org](http://www.funerals.org)).

## **Purposes of the Alliance**

- Promote consumer education and protection with regard to funeral-related issues.
- Encourage people to plan for their own final disposition.
- Assist members and their families and the general public in making plans for funeral arrangements at reasonable cost.
- Increase the opportunity for every person to determine the type of funeral he or she desires.

## **Programs and activities**

- Funeral planning seminars
- Help for individuals needing reliable information about funeral matters
- Publicity about funeral-related issues
- Web publication of funeral price surveys in the southern Finger Lakes region
- Support for legislation that benefits funeral consumers, and opposition to legislation designed to benefit funeral businesses but not consumers

## **FCAFL website**

End-of-life planning aids and information and links to other sources of information are freely available at the Alliance website ([www.imsfca.org](http://www.imsfca.org)) and at its office.

## **Membership**

Membership is free and open to all. Donations are requested to offset the cost of enrolling members and maintaining services. A donation of \$30 per person is suggested.

Enrollment forms can be downloaded from the Alliance website or can be obtained by contacting the Alliance office.

## **Benefits of membership**

- Welcome packets with end-of-life and funeral-planning information, including planning forms that when filled out will provide families with specific instructions about desired funeral arrangements
- The Alliance Newsletter, published twice a year—a continuing source of information about death care planning and customs and the funeral industry from a consumer's perspective.

- Access to benefits of membership in affiliates of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance throughout the U.S. This access can help if you move or die away from home.
- The satisfaction of supporting an organization committed to consumer education and protection.
- Peace of mind knowing that you have made it easier for survivors to make arrangements at the time of your death.

## **Service opportunities for members**

- Funeral planning presentations
- Funeral price survey: collection of price lists, extraction and publication of price data
- Monitoring the website and email discussion list of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance for developments of interest to consumers in the Finger Lakes region
- Monitoring the progress of state legislation that affects funeral consumers; alerting the Board of Directors to needed action
- Contacting legislators about funeral consumer issues
- Newsletter preparation: writing articles, editing, layout
- Placing Alliance brochures in public sites, senior living facilities, etc.
- Participation in policy and activity decisions by serving on the Board of Directors
- Member mailings
- Website maintenance

## When A Death Occurs

It is important for your survivors to know your wishes and your chosen funeral home.

(1) Make sure that the people who will have responsibility for your final disposition have copies of your funeral planning documents.

(2) When an Alliance member dies, call a funeral home, not the FCAFL. A funeral director will fill out a death certificate and obtain a doctor's certification of the death.

(3) Then call family members, minister, priest, rabbi, lawyer — whoever is appropriate.

(4) The funeral director will confer with the survivors, give them a copy of the General Price List of the funeral home, and help them set up a contract for desired goods and services before carrying out any plan. In New York State the involvement of a funeral director in the final disposition of a deceased person is required by law.

**Authority for disposition of remains.** A person can specify who will have the authority to make decisions about the disposition of his or her body after death. A form for this purpose is available at the website of the New York State Public Health Department. If a deceased person did not specify who would have this authority, then the priority set by law begins with the spouse or domestic partner of the deceased and continues with any surviving child at least 18 years old, either surviving parent, any sibling, a guardian, or an appointed fiduciary.

**Memorial or funeral ceremony.** Survivors arrange for a memorial or funeral ceremony or celebration of a person's life, if any observance is desired. A ceremony can occur before or after the final disposition of the deceased person, at a place that the survivors choose.

**Obituaries.** Survivors pay for obituary notices in newspapers. The price per printed line can be obtained by calling the newspaper. The Alliance website has guidelines for content of obituaries.

November 2010

## Anatomical Gifts

A person who plans to donate his or her body to a medical institution or organization should make arrangements with the institution. If you have made these arrangements, then put the name and contact information for the receiving organization on a funeral planning form.

A person whose plan is for body donation should have a back-up plan that can be implemented if the chosen anatomical gift program cannot accept the donation.

In many circumstances the survivors of a deceased person can arrange for donation of the body even if the person did not make advance arrangements.

Two medical schools near the Finger Lakes region have anatomical gift programs:

SUNY Upstate Medical University, Anatomical Gift Program, Dept. of Cell and Developmental Biology, 750 East Adams Street, Syracuse, NY 13210 (315-464-4348). This Program will arrange for a funeral director to transport a donor's body at no cost to the survivors. For this service, call Upstate, not a funeral home.

University of Rochester Medical Center, Anatomical Gift Program, Box 709, 601 Elmwood Avenue, Rochester, NY 14642 (585-275-2592).

Anatomical gifts can also be made, at no cost, to non-profit organizations that serve hospitals and medical teaching and research institutions. Two national organizations that are licensed in New York State are:

International Institute for the Advancement of Medicine, (1-800-486-4426; [www.iiam.org](http://www.iiam.org)) and LifeLegacy Foundation (1-888-774-4438; [www.lifelegacy.org/](http://www.lifelegacy.org/)).

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# Planning for Funeral Needs



*Funeral Consumers Alliance  
of the Finger Lakes, Inc.*

## **Educating Consumers Facilitating Funeral Planning**

**IF** you want to spare your family difficult decisions when you die;

**IF** you prefer funeral arrangements that are simple, dignified and reasonably priced;

**IF** you believe it is wise to make funeral plans in advance and put them in writing;

**IF** you think it is important to know about funeral-related issues;

**THEN** you should join the **Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Finger Lakes.**