

ASPR TRACIE Technical Assistance Request

Request Receipt Date (by ASPR TRACIE): 17 March 2020

Response Date: 18 March 2020, updated 26 March

Type of TA Request: Standard

Request:

The requestor asked for precautions or guidance related to handling and viewing the remains of a deceased COVID-19 patient as well as planning resources for mass fatality management.

Response:

ASPR TRACIE reviewed existing resources, including those on our [Infectious Disease Resource Page](#) and in the [Coronaviruses](#), [Influenza Epidemic/Pandemic](#), and [Fatality Management](#) Topic Collections. While we were not able to locate specific guidance related to handling of a decedent immediately after death or viewing of remains at a hospital, these resources provide general guidance for handling of postmortem specimens, infection control practices, and related topics. Recently released tabletop exercise materials are available in the third section of this document.

Please refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Coronavirus Disease 2019 webpage](#) for the most up-to-date clinical guidance on COVID-19 outbreak management.

I. Postmortem Care

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). [Interim Guidance for Collection and Submission of Postmortem Specimens from Deceased Persons Under Investigation \(PUI\) for COVID-19, February 2020](#).

This guidance is for medical examiners, coroners, pathologists, and others involved in postmortem care of deceased persons under investigation for COVID-19. It includes information on collection and submission of postmortem specimens, biosafety and infection control practices, autopsy procedures, and transportation of human remains.

Indiana Department of Health. (2020). [COVID-19 Guidance for Coroners](#).

This guidance provides information on autopsy procedures; infection control practices; collection, preparation, and submission of postmortem specimens; cleaning and waste disposal; and transportation of human remains specific to patients who died from confirmed COVID-19.

The Royal College of Pathologists. (2020). [Autopsy Practice Relating to Possible Cases of COVID-19 \(2019-nCoV, novel coronavirus from China 2019/2020\)](#).

This document provides guidance for mortuary staff on personal protective equipment (PPE) and handling considerations and diagnosis of COVID-19 at post-mortem examination.

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration. (2020). [COVID-19](#).

This website provides interim guidance to help prevent worker exposure to COVID-19. Guidance for death care workers is included at the bottom of the page.

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration. (2005). [Health and Safety Recommendations for Workers Who Handle Human Remains](#).

This document includes recommendations for healthcare workers on how to safely handle human remains.

UW Medicine. (n.d.). [UW Medicine Autopsy & After Death Services \(AADS\) COVID-19 Response](#). (Accessed 3/18/2020.)

This policy describes the protocol for handling deaths related to COVID-19. The described actions are in addition to the health system's standard postmortem protocols.

II. Funeral Home Guidance

Independent Funeral Directors of Florida. (n.d.). [Funeral Home COVID-19 Policy Samples](#). (Accessed 3/18/2020.)

This site provides examples of various policies from funeral homes across the country regarding public visitations or services and social distancing requirements specific to COVID-19.

National Funeral Directors Association. (n.d.). [Situation Update: Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). (Accessed 3/18/2020.)

This site provides the recording and transcript from a CDC webinar held for the National Funeral Directors Association on March 16, 2020. It includes information on transfers, PPE, and visitations.

Washington State Department of Health. (2020). [Infection Prevention for Funeral Homes Handling Deceased Cases of COVID-19](#).

Mortuary and funeral home workers can use this guidance to prevent infection when handling deceased persons with COVID-19.

III. Tabletop Exercise Materials

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. (2020). [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Fatality Management Tabletop Exercise](#). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This coronavirus fatality management tabletop exercise can be used by government, private sector, and nonprofit organizations. Access the Situational Manual here: <https://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/covid19-fatality-management-ttx-sitman-25march2020-508.docx>. The Situation Manual provides exercise participants with a hypothetical scenario that depicts numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths at the state, regional, and national levels over a period of 40 days and includes discussion questions regarding the following topics: coordination of fatality management operations; information collection and reporting; legal and regulatory considerations; supply chains and resource management; infection control; continuity of operations; mental and behavioral health services; and public messaging and risk communications. The accompanying slide deck provides an overview of the scenario to set the stage for discussion.

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. (2020). [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Fatality Management Tabletop Exercise Situation Manual](#). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This Situation Manual and accompanying slide deck (available at <https://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/covid19-fatalitymanagement-ttx-facilitation-deck-25march2020-508.pptx>) are designed to assist government, private sector, and nonprofit organizations in identifying issues or challenges that may arise when conducting fatality management operations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Situation Manual provides exercise participants with a hypothetical scenario that depicts numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths at the state, regional, and national levels over a period of 40 days and includes discussion questions regarding the following topics: coordination of fatality management operations; information collection and reporting; legal and regulatory considerations; supply chains and resource management; infection control; continuity of operations; mental and behavioral health services; and public messaging and risk communications. The accompanying slide deck provides an overview of the scenario to set the stage for discussion.