Funeral Information

We understand that planning a funeral or memorial service for your baby is difficult to think about. Although it is painful, choosing a final resting place and arranging a special service for your child can help you with the grieving process and provide an opportunity for your healing journey to begin.

The following information will help explain some of the options you have so that you and your family can decide what is right for you. Decisions about caring for your baby’s body are very personal. When making arrangements, there is no wrong answer; it is important to choose what is best for you, your child and your family.

Choosing a final resting place.

- **Cemetery**
  - Interment (earth burial)
  - Entombment (above ground/mausoleum)

- **Cremation**
  - Reduction of the body to cremated remains (ashes) using intense heat.
    - A body may not be cremated immediately following death. Texas law requires a 48 hour waiting period prior to cremation (unless the waiting period is waived by the Medical Examiner).
    - Ashes may be privately scattered; scattered at sea; scattered by airplane in unpopulated areas; buried in a cemetery; or placed in an urn to be kept at home.

Information needed when making funeral arrangements.

- Full name of child
- Date of birth
- Place of birth
- Social security number (if one has been issued)
- Residence/address
- Father’s name, mother’s maiden name
- Place of burial or disposition

Frequently asked questions.

- **Does my religion support cremation?**
  It’s recommended that you speak with your spiritual leader. Hospital chaplains are also available to assist you with religious concerns and/or cultural issues surrounding death, burial, or cremation.

- **Do I have to consent to an autopsy?**
  Having an autopsy performed is your choice (although in some instances, it may be required by the Medical Examiner). Many times families give consent to an autopsy to learn more about the specific cause of death. You may return to the hospital or schedule
a telephone call with your child’s attending doctor to discuss the autopsy results, whichever is the most comfortable for you.

An autopsy will not delay your funeral plans. You can also be reassured that it will not alter the way your baby looks or cause any pain.

If you are interested in having an autopsy performed or would like more information, speak with your child’s attending doctor.

- **Does my baby have to be certain age or weight to be buried or cremated?**
  
  If your baby survived delivery for any length of time, regardless of age or birth weight, state regulations do require burial or cremation. Travel requirements also apply (please see below for additional information).

  If your baby died or was born before the 20th week of your pregnancy (or weighed less than 350 grams at birth) and did not survive delivery, there are no state requirements for burial, cremation or travel.

  No matter what your baby’s age or birth weight, burial, cremation or having a special ceremony is always an option. Your doctor, nurse, social worker or funeral director can provide additional information to help you determine what is best for you and your family.

- **How much will my child’s funeral cost?**
  
  The cost can vary. Some things that can affect funeral costs include:
  - Transferring your baby from the hospital to the funeral home
  - Embalming (optional, unless you are transporting your child)
    - Embalming is the process by which the body is temporarily preserved for travel and/or viewing
    - Both parent(s) must give verbal consent for embalment
  - Use of funeral home facilities for viewing, rosary, ceremony, wake or other services
  - Hearse to transport the casket to the funeral home, church and cemetery
  - Limousines for transport of the family (optional)
  - Special services provided by the funeral home staff including, but not limited to:
    - Obituary for the newspaper
    - Program for service
    - Personalized prayer cards
  - Casket (optional depending on which method of caring for your baby’s body is chosen)
  - Optional outer enclosures (burial vaults, grave boxes, liners)
    - There is no law stating that you must purchase an enclosure
    - The cemetery that you use may have a policy regulating outer enclosures
  - Headstone or marker for the grave

- **What if I cannot afford a funeral for my child?**
  
  There are many funeral homes that work with families to assist with the cost of a child’s funeral. Talk with the funeral director to learn about options.
Some funds may also be available for families in need through the hospital. Speak with your child’s social worker if you would like additional information about financial assistance for funerals.

- **How do I get a copy of my child’s death certificate?**
  The funeral home will send the death certificate to your baby’s attending doctor to sign. The doctor will return the signed certificate to the funeral home that will then file it with the Bureau of Vital Statistics in your area. Fees vary for this service; credit cards are usually accepted. You can request copies of your child's death certificate by fax, mail, or in person.

**Transporting your baby.**

If you choose a final resting place for your baby that is outside of the state of Texas or in another country, there are some guidelines that must be followed (there may also be some fees involved). The funeral director can assist you with details and making the necessary arrangements.

*Some things to keep in mind:*

Transporting your baby out of the country for burial requires coordination between you, your social worker, the consulate and the funeral home(s) involved:

- The consulate for the country to which you would like to take your baby must be informed before transportation can take place.
- There are several documents that must be notarized by the consulate prior to transport. The funeral director (in most cases) will take necessary paperwork to the consulate to be notarized. This may include:
  - Death certificate
  - Certificate of embalming
  - Letter from the attending doctor or the forensic doctor from the funeral home stating the cause of death
  - Transit permit for the airline of choice

**Guidelines for transporting your baby to another state are similar to those listed above.**

- Each state may have different rules/guidelines. *Usually,* the deceased will need to be transported directly from funeral home to funeral home. Your funeral director can help you make sure all the rules/guidelines are met for the state to which you are transporting your baby.

**Air transport:** The airline may require that the casket be sealed shut before transport can occur. Each airline has different fee scales for transporting a casket. The fees are usually determined by the weight of the casket. The casket will be considered **air cargo.** When making reservations with an airline, you will not need to purchase a ticket for the casket. You will make a reservation by speaking with the international **air cargo** department. When making reservations, remember that there may be limited flights to the country to which you are travelling, and there may be limited space for air cargo. Most airlines **will not** transport more than one casket per flight.
Mexico: If you wish, you may transport your baby to Mexico yourself. The Mexican Consulate must be notified prior to transport. Your child’s body must be embalmed and in a casket or approved transport container. You must have a vehicle that is large enough to carry the casket/container inside the vehicle (such as a van, station wagon or truck with camper top). You will need to be prepared to give the funeral home the name of the funeral home and cemetery in Mexico. It is important to travel with all necessary documents (certificate of death, certificate of embalming and specific documents provided by the consulate). Remember to allow 1-2 business days for the consulate to get the paperwork in order.

Reminder: Anyone travelling out of the country must have a valid passport.

We hope that this information is helpful as you make decisions about the final resting place for your baby. If you need more information or have questions, please speak with your spiritual leader, funeral home director or social worker.