

Funeral and Burial Services While Physical Distancing During the COVID-19 Pandemic

At the request of tribal leaders, federal partners developed this Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) fact sheet to help guide tribes with funeral and burial health and safety. This fact sheet also helps tribes plan for an increase in deaths within a community. Tribes and families practice unique traditions and refer to death in varying ways as they honor those who have passed on. We share this public health guidance with sincere respect for those traditions.

Tribal Leaders can do the following:

- Educate your community about who is at higher risk of getting very sick, such as Tribal Elders and those with diabetes and serious heart or lung conditions.
- Postpone large events, including celebrations such as funerals, weddings, baptisms, and holiday gatherings.
- Limit gatherings to a small number (less than 10) of family and friends and ensure physical [distancing and hand washing](#).
- Clean and disinfect where these activities are held.
- Provide plenty of handwashing sinks with soap and water or ensure there is hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for all.

For Attendees:

- Wear a face mask.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home and do not engage in burial and funeral practices if you are sick.
- Practice physical distancing by putting at least 6 feet of distance between yourself and other people.
- More information on [large gatherings and events](#).

Other Protections:

If you are involved with washing the body, shrouding, or other important cultural practices, take steps to reduce your exposure as much as possible. Wear disposable gloves (nitrile, latex, or rubber). And you may need additional equipment (called personal protective equipment, or PPE). Wear:

- Disposable, waterproof isolation gown
- Face shield or goggles
- Facemask

After preparing the body, remove PPE and throw it away. Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Shower after completing body preparation activities. If you did not wear any personal protective equipment while preparing the body, wash your clothes in the warmest setting possible and dry them completely. **Learn More at:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/tribal/faq-burial-practice.html>

Grieving and Honoring a Deceased Loved One

We acknowledge the difficulty and isolation that comes from physical distancing requirements in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to our communities and Elders. When a loved one passes away right now (COVID-19 or non-COVID-19 related), it is difficult to think about how to grieve for them and honor them in traditional ways without physically being with friends and families. Here are a few ideas of ways we can acknowledge and honor our loved ones who have passed while still following physical distancing recommendations:

1. Connect with your family and community members through social media by:
 - a. Creating a memorial page or group on Facebook to post and/or share memories, stories, and photos of your loved one.
 - b. Create an online photo album through a platform like Google Photos for everyone to share photos and create a slideshow in their memory.
2. Use a video conferencing platform, (such as Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, etc), to virtually connect with family members, traditional healers, Elders and the greater community to host a virtual wake where share songs, prayers, and stories.
3. Journal, plant a tree in their memory, or donate to a cause that they cared about.
4. Join a virtual Talking Circle or counseling sessions to share your experiences and learn from others experiencing the same.
5. Connect with online traditional practices and resources such as:
 - a. Native Wellness Institute's daily Wellness Hour activities: <https://www.facebook.com/NativeWellnessInstitute/>
 - b. Connect with one of Facebook's virtual powwow groups.
 - c. Join a virtual beading/crafting circles like this: <https://www.instagram.com/thebeadingcircle/>
 - d. Take care of your physical health by joining a virtual yoga session.

Additional Resources:

- NIHB's Guidance: <https://www.nihb.org/covid-19/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Burial-and-Funeral-Considerations-COVID-19-FINAL.pdf>
- Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/bravery-in-bereavement/202004/how-cope-bereavement-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>
- NIH: <https://directorsblog.nih.gov/2020/04/07/dealing-with-stress-anxiety-and-grief-during-covid-19/>