

NIH Clinical Center

Funeral Services Form – FAQs & GUIDELINES

What is the purpose of this service?

As a service to patients who agree to an autopsy at the Clinical Center (CC), Institutes (ICs) may elect to pay for shipment of the remains to and/or from the CC. ICs may also authorize additional services, as listed on the form. These services are for those that are not covered by the Social Work Department as an indigent burial contract service(s).

What is the process for requesting NIH CC Funeral Services?

This form can be completed by a member of the IC research team. The IC must provide an Outside Medical Services Form approving payment of the services requested. The IC should indicate a “cost not to exceed” amount. Once complete, all forms must be submitted to the CC Admissions Office. The CC Admissions Office will work with the research team, the next of kin, and funeral home to ensure all necessary paperwork is completed to facilitate transportation and/or other authorized services. Admissions will provide the Patient Support Services Office the payment approval which will be entered into the NIH Procurement system before services are rendered. If request for services occurs and must take place after-hours, then the Procurement request will be entered the next business day.

Can we pay for transport of remains to the local funeral home where the patient lived?

If within the DC, MD, VA area, a local funeral home, designated by the family, can transport the patient’s remains to/from the local funeral home. If airline transportation is required, the IC will need to approve payment for shipment of remains to/from the **closest major airport** near the patient’s home/facility. ICs may elect to pay for additional local transportation, e.g. ground transportation to/from a the location (funeral home, hospice, hospital) to the nearest airport. Specify desired transportation arrangements in "Other Instructions".

At what point should a family identify their local Funeral Home?

If a patient dies at home or in a facility, it is best for the family to identify and start working with a funeral home in their local area. This information is needed by the Admissions Office in order to facilitate the arrangements for the transport of the body.

Can the IC pay for funeral services performed by the family's designated funeral home?

Funeral home services in the patient/family’s local area are the responsibility of the patient/family. If an IC wishes to pay for these services, additional funding approval will be required. This may require additional levels of approval depending on the total expected expense for the services requested. The IC will have to work closely with the CC Patient Support Services Department (Admissions Office) regarding the coordination of services and funding approval.

If a patient dies outside of the NIH Clinical Center, can we get the body here for a STAT autopsy?

Unfortunately, several factors may impact the ability to transport a body to the Clinical Center for an autopsy that is required within 4- 8 hours after death. These may include, but are not limited to, travel distance, airline cargo facilities, available flights, and weekend availability of any needed services prior to shipment, e.g. Vital Records, State offices, embassies. It is easier to arrange transport for STAT autopsies if the patient is in the local Metropolitan DC area.

What is required for Disposition of the body after Autopsy ?

If the IC wishes to pay for post-autopsy body preparation or cremation services, these items should be selected on the form. The “Religious or Other Considerations/Instructions” box should be used to note how the family wishes the remains to be handled. Even if the IC is not paying for these services, it is helpful to know how the family would like the patient’s remains handled post autopsy. For example, if the family hopes to have a service or viewing, the local funeral home will seek to make repairs or will indicate if they advise against open casket viewing.