

# MAKING funeral arrangements

We understand that planning a funeral or memorial service for your child 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 child'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

Having a burial, cremation or special ceremony is always an option, no matter your child's age. Your child's doctor, nurse, social worker or funeral director can provide additional information to help you determine what is best for you and your family.

### **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 or Justice of the Peace).
- 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. You can obtain more information about this from the funeral home.

## INFORMATION NEEDED WHEN MAKING FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

- Full name of your 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

# MAKING funeral arrangements CONTINUED

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **How do I get a copy of my child's death certificate?**

The funeral home will send the death certificate to your child'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. This process may take up to a few weeks' time. You may obtain copies of the death certificate from your funeral home. Fees vary for this service; credit cards are usually accepted. After the funeral, you can request copies of your child's death certificate by fax, mail, or in person. For questions or more information, contact the local Bureau of Vital Statistics at **713-837-0311**.

### **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.

### **Does an autopsy delay funeral plans?**

An autopsy will not delay your funeral plans. You can also be reassured that it will not alter the way your child looks at the funeral.

Please refer to the "information about autopsy" page in this booklet if you want to learn more about the autopsy process.

### **How much will my child's funeral cost?**

The cost can vary. Some things that can affect funeral costs include:

- Transferring your child from Texas Children's 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 child'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
- If you choose to transport your child across state lines or out of the country, the fees will substantially increase

### **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 Texas Children's Hospital. Speak with your child's social worker if you would like additional information about financial assistance for funerals.

# MAKING funeral arrangements CONTINUED

## TRANSPORTING YOUR CHILD'S BODY

If you choose a final resting place for your child 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 child 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 child 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 child to another state**

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 child.

*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 traveling, 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 child to Mexico yourself. If you choose cremation, the ashes can be carried on a flight or in a car at no cost and with no legal restrictions. The Mexican Consulate must be notified prior to transport. If you choose to bury your child in Mexico, 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 Houston 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. The consulate's office is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (the office is not open on weekends). If you need to speak to someone at the Mexican Consulate in Houston, call 713-217-6800.

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

We hope this information is helpful as you make decisions about the final resting place for your child. If you need more information or have questions, please speak with your spiritual leader, funeral home director or social worker. You can also call the Pediatric Advanced Care Team at **832-822-PACT (7228)** or email **GriefSupport@texaschildrens.org**. Calls and emails will be answered within 24 hours on business days.