

How Oregon State and County Vital Records Staff Can Assist Oregon Families to Care for Their Own Dead

Oregon families have the legal right to custody and control of their own dead. They may also choose to file the 24-Hour Notice and Death Certificate without the assistance of a funeral director. The Oregon Health Authority's Center for Health Statistics has made provisions for such families to access these forms and receive information about these responsibilities through a "Home Burial Packet" accessed through the Center's Registration Unit Manager. Vital Records staff in county clerk and recorder's offices may be largely unfamiliar with paper filings and families handling this paperwork on their own. Knowing how to serve these families, who are exercising their rights under Oregon law, is a vital public service.

Legal Authority of Families

In Oregon, the legislative authority for families to act as unpaid funeral services practitioners is found in ORS 432.005(23)(a):

SYSTEM OF VITAL STATISTICS

432.005 Definitions. As used in this chapter, unless the context requires otherwise:

(23) "Person acting as a funeral service practitioner" means:

(a) A person other than a funeral service practitioner licensed under ORS 692.045, including but not limited to a relative, friend or other interested party, who performs the duties of a funeral service practitioner without payment

Ways You Are Empowered to Assist Families

As a member of the state or county vital records staff, you may field inquiries or accept filings from families wishing to file the 24-Hour Notice and Death Certificate without reliance on a funeral director. These suggestions will help these families receive the same high level of service provided to those using a professional to file via OVERS:

1. Ensure that you and all of your vital records colleagues are familiar with Oregon law regarding a family's right to use an unpaid "person acting as a funeral service practitioner" under ORS 432.005(23)(a).
2. Ensure that you and all of your vital records colleagues are familiar with the contents of the "Home Burial Packet" provided on request from the state's Center for Health Statistics Registration Unit Manager.
3. If additional clarification or training is needed to ensure paper filings will be accepted and processed in a timely fashion, consult the Center for Health Statistics Registration Unit Manager.
4. Familiarizing yourself with the additional information resources below will further equip you to serve families who choose to care for their dead.

Additional Information

Oregon Funeral Resources & Education www.oregonfuneral.org

National Home Funeral Alliance www.homefuneralalliance.org

Funeral Consumers Alliance www.funerals.org