



Funeral Planning Checklist



DETERMINE WHO CAN LEGALLY PLAN THE FUNERAL



Laws about who can make decisions about the funeral vary by state. In general, the responsibility first falls on a person chosen by the deceased in writing. If that person isn't available or if the deceased didn't designate someone, the responsibility tends to go to the next of kin.



LOCATE FUNERAL WISHES OR PRE-ARRANGEMENTS



If your loved one prepared their wishes ahead of time, determine what paperwork has been created and where it's stored.

Look for a/an:

Funeral directive

Advance directive

Form of disposition

If your loved one did not leave any of these documents behind, you may need to make educated guesses about their desires.



FIGURE OUT BUDGET AND WHO'S PAYING



According to the Funeral Consumers Alliance, funerals cost an average of nearly \$8,000.

If your loved one pre-planned a funeral, they may have already paid for some or all the expenses. However, if they didn't pay for it already, you need to figure out who is paying for the funeral, and how.

Remember, those paying for the funeral are not obligated to go into debt. Determine your final budget and then prioritize wishes in order of importance.



DETERMINE THE CITY OF THE FUNERAL AND BURIAL



You'll need to decide where the loved one's funeral and burial will be.

These can be different cities or the same one. For instance, they may currently live in a city where most of their loved ones are, but they may want to be laid to rest in a different location.



RESEARCH FUNERAL SERVICES AND HIRE A FUNERAL DIRECTOR



Hiring a funeral director isn't always required (though some states mandate them for at-home funerals), but they can function as an event planner and legal advisor, helping walk you through the steps of planning a funeral.

A funeral director may also have partnerships with some vendors or rental spaces and help get you decent deals on things you need. However, be sure you're clear about your budget and monitor it alongside them.





FILL OUT A FORM OF DISPOSITION



If the loved one didn't leave a form of disposition defining what they want to be done with their remains, the legally authorized representative must fill this out.

A form of disposition dictates what is to be done with the body, which could mean:

- An open casket funeral
 - Burial or natural burial
 - Cremation
 - Donation to a research organization
- Depending on what will happen to the body, you may also need to pick out an urn, coffin, casket, or cremation container.



CHOOSE SPECIFIC LOCATIONS FOR THE CEREMONY, RECEPTION, AND FINAL RESTING PLACE



Choosing these locations should be based on what you know of the deceased.

For example, would they want a natural or traditional burial? Would they dream of a church or outdoor service? Would they prefer their ashes to be scattered someplace or put on display in a home?

As part of choosing these locations, you may have the opportunity to decorate the space. The most common decor includes flowers, candles, and photos of the loved one, but there is no wrong answer so long as your location permits your choices.



CREATE GUEST LIST AND INVITE PEOPLE



You aren't required to invite people to both the funeral and the reception. The funeral can be open to the public, but you may only invite close family and friends to the reception or burial. Collaborate with those closest to your loved one to create the guest list.

To expedite the process, invitations may need to happen via phone, email, or social media event.



CHOOSE WHO WILL SPEAK AT THE CEREMONY



If your loved one didn't specify who they would want to speak at their funeral or memorial service, you could help determine who does so.

Talk to family members and close friends, and clarify they're allowed to say "no" if they're uncomfortable.

Common types of funeral speeches are:

- Eulogies
- Religious text passages
- Non-religious text passages
- Impromptu speeches



ASK FOR DONATIONS **OPTIONAL**



Asking for donations at a funeral is common. Donations frequently go to a favorite charity, a scholarship fund for the deceased's children, or toward the funeral and medical costs owed by the family.

