

8 Ways Hospital Staff Can Support Home Funeral Families

By Lee Webster

We've all heard that the majority of us wish to die at home and that very few of us manage it. As more people become aware of and plan for home funerals, we will someday see similar statistics about how many of us planned to die peacefully in our beds expecting to then be laid out and waked at home vs. how many of us ended up serviced by professionals after a hospital stay or ER visit. One way we can prevent those statistics is to begin early to find ways to assist families who choose to bring the body of a loved one home, even after death in a hospital, including after autopsy, organ

donation, or traumatic circumstances. Hospital staff can play key roles in helping families make their way through the body release process.



Photo courtesy of Olivia Bareham, Sacred Crossings

Here's how hospital staff can help:

- 1) Ensure that your body release policy and other pertinent policies are in compliance with the laws in your state regarding the right of next-of-kin to take custody and control of the body, even in states that require hiring a funeral director for some aspect of care
- 2) Create policy that is easy to follow and that lays out the procedure for removal and release to the family.
- 3) Ask families what their funeral plans are, rather than asking what funeral home to call
- 4) Offer information about home funeral options and resources
- 5) Assist in completing appropriate paperwork in a timely manner so the next-of-kin will be able to meet time requirements for removal
- 6) Offer information about reliable removal services or home funeral-friendly funeral directors willing to file paperwork and transport to the home for a reasonable fee
- 7) Recognize the family's legal right to have a home funeral throughout the experience
- 8) Demonstrate confidence in the family to care for their own dead