

PRACTICAL NEXT STEPS

1. Usually nothing really needs to be decided in the first 24 hours of your loved one's death. Don't make "big" decisions, and don't be rushed into making decisions before you are ready.
2. If the coroner/medical examiner (ME) takes custody of your deceased love one, you will have time make mortuary decisions. If your loved one died at home and the coroner/ME does not take custody of your loved one you will need to decide on a mortuary to remove your loved one from the premises. If your loved one died in the hospital they often have a morgue and they will usually keep your loved one until you decide what to do.
3. If a loved one died in your home leaving blood and/or bodily fluids, you may need to hire a biohazard clean up service. These services are listed in your local phone directory, and often the local police department has a list. It is recommended that you call a few companies and compare prices. If you own your home, usually your homeowners policy will cover the costs.
4. You will need to make funeral arrangements. See the Funeral page to see your rights as a consumer and to see your options.
5. If you have children who have been affected by a death, contact the principle and counselor at their school and tell them what happened.
6. If your tragic event attracted media attention, you might be pursued by the media for an interview. Chose a family spokesperson. See the Dealing With the Media page.
7. You may need to notify others in your family about the death. See the Death Notification and the Helping Children After the Death of a Loved One pages for guidelines.
8. You may be "bombarded" by friends, neighbors and family members after the death. They want to be helpful. But often they don't know how. And worse, they often say things that are hurtful. Try to see that they are well intentioned and trying to help.
Try to be assertive and tell others what you want and what you don't want from them. You have a right to grieve and make decisions based on what you need and want. You don't need to comply with how others think you should behave. On the other hand, after the flurry of offers to help, you may find that everyone seems to "disappear." This is usually because they feel helpless, and they don't know what to say or do to help. It may also be because they expect you to "get on with it."
9. In the days and weeks after the tragedy, you may find that you have questions about the circumstances or causes of your loved one's death. You have a right to information that is available including information in the reports prepared by the professionals who were involved. Ask those who were involved (doctor, police, fire, coroner.....) for a meeting to discuss "what happened". It may be helpful to have a family member or friend serve as an Advocate for you.
10. In the days, weeks and months after the tragedy you may need to deal with Estate issues (insurance/benefits/social security ...). See the Handling Estates page for guidelines.