

A Quick Overview of The Funeral Rule

Plus resources for
planning a
natural burial

The Funeral Rule is enforced by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and serves to help protect individuals and families. The rule mandates transparency and allows families to choose only the goods and services they want from funeral homes. When effectively exercised, the Funeral Rule can empower families to have funerals that are meaningful and economical. The rule can also facilitate easier access to **eco-conscious options**.

Specifically, you have the right to:

- 1.** **Only purchase the funeral options you want and need.** You are not required to purchase a package that has items you do not want. You can choose individual services (such as embalming or a memorial service) or individual products (like caskets or urns).
- 2.** Receive price information over the phone. Funeral homes are required to provide price details upon request. You do not have to share your personal information beforehand either. Although not mandatory, many funeral directors may also make their information available online or snail mail their price lists on request.
- 3.** Receive an itemized, written price list from a funeral home. The funeral home must give you a General Price List (GPL) that is yours to keep. It lists all the items and services offered and their corresponding price.
- 4.** Receive a written price list for caskets before you even see the actual caskets. Although this is sometimes included in the General Price List (GPL), it is often separate. Receiving the casket price list before you see caskets allows you to ask about lower priced options that may not be on display.
- 5.** Receive a written price list for outer burial containers. No state in the U.S. requires outer burial containers, though many cemeteries may mandate them to prevent graves from caving in during landscape maintenance. If the funeral home doesn't list their prices on the GPL but sells containers, you have the right to see a separate price list before you see the actual containers. Again, this list allows you to ask about lower priced options that may not be on display.
- 6.** Receive a written statement about the price of each service and item you are purchasing before you pay. This is required and should include all services, goods, and the total cost.

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7.

You have a right to an explanation within the written statement for any legal, cemetery, or crematory requirement compelling the purchase of any services or goods that you are being charged for.

8.

You can use an “alternative container” instead of a casket for cremation.

No state or local law requires a casket for cremation. A funeral home that provides cremation as a service must tell you alternatives are available and provide them on request. Alternative containers may be made of cardboard, unfinished wood, pressed wood, or fiberboard.

9.

You have the right to secure a casket, shroud, or urn from elsewhere and not from the funeral home.

Funeral directors are obligated to work with any purchased casket or even one you make yourself. They cannot charge you a fee for this. You are not required to be present when your casket or urn from a third party seller is delivered to a funeral home.

Check out local funerary artisans for more sustainable options that are often more affordable and support our local Michigan economy!

10.

You can make funeral arrangements that do not include embalming. No

state in the country requires routine embalming. Some states require embalming in specific circumstances, but in most cases, refrigeration is an acceptable alternative. Some funeral homes may have a policy that requires embalming for public viewing of the body. If preservation is necessary, you can ask if refrigeration is possible.

Note, Michigan requires embalming under specific circumstances, such as when:

- The person died of diphtheria, meningococcal infections, plague, polio, scarlet fever, or smallpox
- The body will be transported and will not reach its destination within 48 hours after death, unless it is placed in a “sound shipping case.”



All incredibly rare!



Some (but not all!) funeral directors interpret this as bodies absolutely need to be embalmed after 48 hours. Ask about “sound shipping case” options, such as a Ziegler casket and/or consider exploring other funeral homes, if desired.

Are you interested in a **natural/ green burial**? Learn more about how to plan one here:

www.hickorynutfarmstead.com/planning




This document was prepared for the Michigan Deathcare Collaborative by Hickory Nut Farmstead, a Michigan-based small business crafting woven caskets, urns, and plant-dyed shrouds.
www.hickorynutfarmstead.com

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