

## 6 Ways Law Enforcement Can Support Home Funeral Families

By Lee Webster

We've heard about it before: a concerned neighbor calls the police when they learn that the folks next door have a dead body on ice. The police show up at the door, the family explains that they are having a home funeral, and the experience goes from peaceful and intimate to upsetting and the opposite of what the family was seeking. The officer, unaware of the fine details of funeral law in his or her state, is now responsible for an on-the-spot investigation into the complexities of the law, explaining the families' rights to the neighbor, and supporting the family who was looking for less intervention, less interference, less fanfare, not more. Law enforcement, once aware of the specifics of the law, are there to help, but they may need to know how. Here are some resources to have on hand:

***Final Rights: Reclaiming the American Way of Death*** by Slocum and Carlson. Each chapter gives the exact legal language in your state's statutes that gives next-of-kin custody and control of the body. Find your state's chapter at [funerals.org](http://funerals.org) or order the book from your favorite bookseller.

***Quick Guide to Legal Requirements for Home Funerals in Your State***. This chart lays out exactly what is legally required to care for the dead in every state. Find it in the NHFA/FCA publication ***Restoring Families' Rights to Choose*** on sale from Amazon, or download it here: <http://homefuneralalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Quick-Guide-to-Home-Funerals-By-State.pdf>

### ***Here's how law enforcement officers can help:***

- 1) Understand that all families have the right to care for their own dead in every state in the US by researching the laws
- 2) Assure neighbors that the family is acting within its rights
- 3) Assure anyone involved that dead bodies do not pose additional health and safety risks (*according to the CDC, WHO, PAHO, CID*)
- 4) Assure anyone involved that any specific health risks the deceased may have had prior to death are being addressed
- 5) Assist next-of-kin in getting the death certificate signed by the doctor responsible, and/or getting the death certificate processed in a timely manner
- 6) Demonstrate confidence in the family