**How Cemetery Staff Can Support Arizona Families**

**Who Care for Their Own Dead**

Arizona families have the legal right to custody and control of their own dead. Whether the death was anticipated or unanticipated, once time and cause of death are established, the family may choose to care for and transport the body, file the death certificate, arrange for burial, and conduct any other aspect of after-death care without the assistance of a funeral director, or using one for some but not all of these tasks.

**Legal Authority of Families**

In Arizona, the legislative authority for families to act as unpaid funeral services practitioners is found in **Arizona Statute § 36-326** where the law declares that a body disposition permit may be issued to “a funeral director or other responsible person.” The responsible person is described additionally as the “Authoring agent” in ARS 36-831, starting with the spouse or designated agent.

**Ways You Are Empowered to Assist Families**

Your business may provide some of the services of a funeral director. You may typically rely on a funeral home to walk a family through much of the process. Regardless of your services, cemetery staff that sell directly to the public can be prepared to work with families who are acting as their own funeral director:

1. Ensure that your staff are fully aware of the following information and are able to share it with interested families: “Under Arizona law, families may conduct tasks commonly performed by a funeral home, except embalming (which is not required by Arizona law). This may include:
   * caring for the deceased (for example, bathing and dressing);
   * sheltering the deceased at home;
   * filing death notice, handling death certificate/transportation/disposition permit;
   * transporting the body home or to another location for care and viewing (sometimes called a wake or vigil), and to place of final disposition;
   * making arrangements for any ceremony and for final disposition (except making arrangement appointments for cremation).”
2. Unlike licensed funeral services practitioners, there is no legal time limit for how long families may spend caring for their deceased family member in a private setting. Be prepared to receive the body directly from a family who has chosen to shelter, refrigerate, and transport the deceased themselves.
3. Support the family and their community in considering options for meaningful hands-on engagement in ceremony and ritual. For a burial this can include carrying and lowering the body or remains and helping to close the grave.
4. Familiarizing yourself with the additional information resources below will further equip you to serve families who choose to care for their dead.

**Additional Information**

Arizona Funeral Resources & Education www.AZfuneral.org

National End-of-Life Doula Alliance www.nedalliance.org

National Home Funeral Alliance www.homefuneralalliance.org

Funeral Consumers Alliance www.funerals.org

*How Funeral Directors Can Support Home Funeral Families*

*Opening, Closing, and Maintaining a Green Burial Cemetery*

*On the Way to the Green Burial Cemetery: A Guide for Families*