Bereavement & Resource Guide



University Medical Center New Orleans

2000 Canal St. New Orleans, LA umcno.org



When your loved one dies

The loss of a loved one, whether suddenly or after a long illness, is extremely difficult for all of us. The days that follow will be a time of great grief and sorrow for you. There will also be a number of tasks that will need to be dealt with.

We've created this pamphlet to help guide you through some of the steps that now need to be taken. We've also included resources and contact information that might be helpful to you during this time.

Notes	

Notes

Hospital procedures following a patient death

Care after a patient's death is very important to us at University Medical Center New Orleans. Our staff will treat your loved one with the utmost respect, and we will do our best to honor the wishes of our patients' families and/or the next of kin. A nurse will prepare a quiet environment where you and your family will be able to spend time with your loved one to say your goodbyes.

Autopsy

University Medical Center offers the benefit of an autopsy in all hospital deaths. There is no charge to the patient or their family for these services. An autopsy is performed by a physician pathologist for a variety of purposes and intents, which may be as simple as your family's peace of mind. Family members sometimes request that an autopsy be done. The purpose of an autopsy might also include honoring our commitment to extend the medical knowledge we gain from every patient care experience. In certain situations, Louisiana law obligates facilities to conduct autopsies. This can be explained to you upon request. An autopsy typically doesn't delay any funeral arrangements and doesn't usually prevent an open-casket funeral. To obtain the results of an autopsy performed at University Medical Center, please contact the Release of Information office at 504.702.2082. If the autopsy was performed by a coroner's office, please contact that coroner's office directly for results. Just so you know, it sometimes takes up to three months to obtain autopsy results, so don't be alarmed if the results are not ready for you immediately.

Organ donation or body donation

The Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency (LOPA) is a not-for-profit organ and tissue recovery agency designated by the federal government to work with hospitals and other partners throughout the state of Louisiana, such as the eye bank, to save and enhance lives through the transplant of recovered organs, tissue, and eyes. One organ donor can save the lives of up to nine people; one tissue donor can enhance the lives of up to 50 people; one eye donor can restore sight for up to six people. There is no charge for donation, as it is a gift of life to others. If this is something your family is interested in exploring, visit LOPA.org for more information.

Body donation to science cannot be done unless prior donation arrangements (before death) have been made and the appropriate documentation papers that show the acceptance of the donation are presented to the hospital. Your forms must be on file with the Department of Health and Hospitals Bureau of Anatomical Services at least 60 days before death in order for your loved one to be considered a registered donor. If death occurs prior to the end of the 60-day waiting period, the donation still may be made if the family or estate pays for all the transportation charges.

There are some instances in which the donation will not be accepted even if it had been previously accepted, such as if an autopsy is performed, an infectious disease is present (hepatitis, HIV, or sepsis), or the body has been severely damaged in an accident or trauma.

For more information, you may go to the Department of Health and Hospitals Bureau of Anatomical Services website at medschool.lsuhsc. edu/cell_biology/anatomical_services.aspx, or contact that office at 504.568.4012 or 504.568.2165.

Personal belongings

Obtaining your loved one's valuables

A patient's valuables (money, jewelry, etc.) may be obtained by the patient's legal next of kin from the Hospital Public Safety office, located in room 2673 on the second floor of the University Medical Center Diagnostic & Testing (Hospital) building. You can pick your loved one's valuables up anytime, around the clock. Please note: You must have a picture ID and you will be required to sign a statement that you are the patient's legal next of kin. You may be asked to provide and show legal documentation, such as a birth certificate or marriage certificate, showing your relationship to the patient. Call the Hospital Public Safety office at 504.702.3108 for instructions or additional information.

Obtaining a patient's clothing

You should have received your loved one's clothes from the patient care area. Please note: In the event that your loved one died as the result of an act of violence, clothing is taken by homicide detectives and is considered legal evidence. In this situation, clothing will not be given to the family. There also may be some instances in which the clothing is soiled or damaged beyond repair and will be disposed of by hospital staff.

Notes

Important telephone numbers and services

University Medical Center

Main switchboard	504.702.3000
Pastoral Care	504.702.3064
Social Services/Case Management	504.702.4114
Medical Records Requests	504.702.2079
Patient Experience	504.702.3600
Hospital Public Safety (for valuables)	504.702.3108
Release of Information	504.702.2082

Coroner's Offices

Orleans Parish Coroner's Office	504.658.9660
Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office	504.365.9100
St. Tammany Parish Coroner's Office	985.781.1150

Grief and Trauma Support Services/Groups

Children's Bureau of New Orleans	504.525.2366
Compassionate Friends	877.969.0010
NO/AIDS Task Force	504.821.2601
(For survivors of those who have died of AIDS)	
Akula Foundation Grief Resource Center	504.723.3628

Other Resources

Veterans Affairs Benefits	800.827.1000
On the Internet	webhealing.org
	griefnet.org

Contacting the funeral home and transporting your loved one

You will need to contact a funeral home of your choice as soon as possible. If you need help, please ask our staff how they might assist you—we are prepared to help in any way we can.

Your loved one's body will be released as soon as possible to the funeral home of choice. We have processes in place to safely guarantee the release to your specified funeral home of choice. In most cases, the body will be released to the funeral home the following morning after 10 am unless an autopsy is to be performed, in which case release is usually later that day. We are unable to store your loved one's remains for a long period of time, so please make arrangements as soon as possible. After 30 days, or if our facility is at capacity, the patient's remains will be moved to the coroner's office, and you will need to make arrangements directly with the coroner's office after that time.

When contacting the funeral home, you will need to have your deceased loved one's full name, date of birth, and Social Security number readily available. The funeral home will often require a deposit before they will accept your loved one's body.

Make an appointment with the funeral director to discuss and finalize funeral arrangements and their services. The funeral director is a trained professional who will assist and advise you in many areas, such as types of caskets, clothes for your loved one to be buried in, cremation, etc. The funeral director will contact your cemetery and can notify the newspaper to publish an obituary, if your family desires.

Obtaining a death certificate

Once your loved one's body is picked up by your chosen funeral home, the funeral home will enter the necessary information into a Louisiana database and create the death certificate. This process may take several days to fully complete. Certified copies of the death certificate are obtained from the funeral director. It is advisable that you order multiple copies to be used for legal purposes (Social Security benefits, life insurance, Veterans Affairs benefits, etc.). We suggest you obtain at least 10–15 copies to make sure you have enough for every need that might arise. The charge will be included in the burial costs.

Other reminders/information

Grief and bereavement can be complicated by the seemingly endless number of tasks you need to perform. The immediate days following a loved one's death will be focused on the funeral or memorial services. Afterwards, there are various financial and legal issues that also need to be dealt with.

Every situation is different, but here are some general guidelines of tasks we've compiled that may need to be addressed:

- Employer: If your loved one was working, you should notify his or her employer and ask about any benefits, such as pension plans, or pay due, including vacation or sick time
- Social Security: Notify your local Social Security office of the death. If your loved one was covered, the spouse or dependents may be eligible for certain benefits
- Health insurer: Contact the health insurance company or employer regarding terminating coverage for the deceased while continuing coverage for others who may be on the policy
- Life insurance: Contact the agent or company to ask how to file a claim.
 Usually, the beneficiary will need to complete claim forms and related paperwork. If the deceased is listed as a beneficiary on any other policy, arrange to have their name removed
- Accounts: Arrange to change any joint bank accounts into your name.
 Make sure important bills, such as mortgage payments, continue to be paid
- Tax return: Seek the advice of an accountant or tax advisor about filing the deceased's tax return for the year of the death

If your loved one was a veteran, you may be able to get assistance with the funeral and burial plot, and you may be eligible for other benefits. For information on benefits, call the office of Veterans Affairs at 800.827.1000.

Grief therapy and bereavement support groups

No matter how loving and supportive your family members and friends may be, you may desire or require additional grief support. Those who travel the path of grief can be helped immensely through various support groups. There are support groups locally and on the internet to assist you with the grief process over the loss of your loved one.

There are many support groups on the internet, including groups for suicide survivors, loss of a spouse, loss of a parent, loss of a child, and loss of a sibling. Sharing your thoughts and feelings with others, expressing your grief, or simply reading about and digesting other's experiences can often bring you some comfort. We encourage you to seek out grief support groups or bereavement support groups in your area or on the internet—you don't have to grieve alone.

One of the resources available free of charge in the New Orleans metro area is the Grief Resource Center through Canon Hospice, sponsored by the Akula Foundation. The center can be reached by calling 504.723.3628 or 504.881.0452.

Our staff is truly sorry for your loss. Please let any hospital staff member know how we can serve you better during your time of need.