



STEPHENSON-DEARMAN FUNERAL HOME, INC.

Serving Southeast Arkansas since 1928

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To our friends in Monticello, Drew County, and Southeast Arkansas

On behalf of our entire staff here at Stephenson-Dearman Funeral Home, in light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) we want to ensure you that in these times of uncertainty, the safety of the families we serve and our staff remains our highest priority.

We have been in close contact with state and national organizations such as the Center for Disease Control, World Health Organization, Arkansas Department of Health, National Funeral Director's Association and the Arkansas Funeral Director's Association discussing the impact of this virus on funeral homes and the families we serve. The following guidelines have been recommended and will be effective immediately at SDFH until further notice:

- Funerals will be limited to immediate family members, not to exceed 10
- Social distancing should be used with good hygiene and no welcoming gestures such as hand shaking or hugs
- To the extent possible, all funerals will be held in our chapel or preferably in an outside environment such as graveside services or other outdoor venues
- We encourage the general public to sign our guestbook online since they will be unable to sign the guestbook at the funeral home. If you do not have access to a computer, feel free to give us a call and we will be happy to enter your name and message on our online registry
- Family arrangement conferences will be limited to 2-3 persons or preferably, by teleconference or electronically via email and text messages

If you happen to be 65 years or older, we strongly discourage your attendance. Also if you are coughing, sneezing, have a fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat, we discourage your attendance. We would also recommend you wash your hands with disinfectant soap in our restrooms before entering our chapel or use one of the many hand sanitizing stations in our facility.

Stephenson-Dearman Funeral Home will continue to provide earth burial and cremation options to the people of Monticello, Drew County, and Southeast Arkansas in a professional and dignified manner just as we have done for 92 years. We are in the process of equipping our funeral chapel with livestream capabilities so extended family and friends can view services in real time. Families will also be offered the option to have a larger memorial service at a future date. Our facilities will have daily cleaning and disinfecting procedures for the safety of our staff and families we serve.

We will continue to monitor the situation as it is quickly evolving and will continue to post any updates as they become available on this page. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation to help keep everyone safe in light of this unprecedented situation. If you should have any questions, don't hesitate to call us at 870-367-2451 or email us at info@stephensondearman.com.

Chuck Dearman and the Stephenson-Dearman Funeral Home Staff

COVID-19 and Funeral FAQs

Our funeral home remains committed and prepared to safely care for families during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

While things are changing day to day, we will continue to enable families to participate in the rituals that are most important to them, if they are feasible.

The CDC has provided guidance to funeral homes on best practices to allow families to mourn their loved ones while also making sure our community is protected.

We know that you have many questions about how this affects funeral services. The responses below are based on the current CDC guidelines. Please note that these may change as we learn new things and we will do our best to keep you updated. If you have questions, please call your funeral director to get the most up-to-date information.

Will I still be able to have a funeral for a loved one who passes?

These are indeed uncertain and concerning times, yet it is vital to remember we are a community, addressing issues such as COVID-19 together, while supporting and respecting each other in every possible way. Our priority is caring for the families we serve, our associates committed to providing that care, and our community.

The dedicated compliance team of our funeral home is carefully monitoring guidelines and recommendations from:

- The Center for Disease Control
- National Funeral Directors Association
- State & Local Officials.

We will post all related updates received from any of the above or other reliable sources.

We will adhere to any state guidelines as soon as they become available just as all the members of our community will. There have thus far been no national directives that visitations or services should be cancelled (please check with state guidelines if you are unsure). We are committed to being fully adaptable to the wishes of the families we serve and the well-being of our community. As always, we will be in communication with all churches to coordinate with their protocols, family wishes and best practices.

We are taking every precaution to accommodate family wishes regarding funeral arrangements and services while taking all steps to assure the safety and comfort of those wishing to honor their loved one. Those steps include but are not limited to:

- Posted reminders regarding physical contact among visitors and family
- Our website online register page
- Honoring telephone requests for names to be added to the physical register book.
- Continued adherence to our existing internal universal precaution protocols
- Hand sanitizer

As always, we remain fully committed to providing that care and honor to the very best of our ability.

Please visit our website or Facebook page for updates as they become available.

Am I at risk if I go to a funeral or visitation service for a loved one who passed away from COVID-19?

At this time, there is no known risk associated with being in the same room for a funeral or visitation service if your loved one passed away from COVID-19.

The main risks for the spread of COVID-19 are among those attending the service. Because of this, many funeral homes are switching to hosting small, family only events, private graveside services or web hosted events. Check with your funeral director to find out what modifications are in place currently.

If you do attend a funeral or visitation, please keep these guidelines in mind:

- Stay home if you are sick, particularly if you have fever over 100.4, respiratory symptoms, a runny nose or any other flu like symptoms.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Avoid direct physical contact with others such as shaking hands, holding hands or hugging.

Am I at risk if I touch someone who died of COVID-19 after they have passed away?

While it is unlikely you will get sick yourself, you will want to make sure you do not touch the deceased if you attend funeral or visitation. Remember that funeral home employees have been dealing with infectious disease forever, and they are experienced in dealing with these types of situations.

Are there any changes in burial practices that I need to know about?

For the most part, burial practices can continue as they normally would. Once again, keep in mind that infectious diseases are nothing new. Funeral directors know how to keep themselves, their staff and their communities safe.

Embalming is still possible. And typically, the decedent may be buried or cremated according to the family's preferences. You will want to check for any local or state requirements as well.

However, CDC guidelines do state that if *"washing the body or shrouding are important religious or cultural practices, families are encouraged to work with their community cultural and religious leaders and funeral home staff on how to reduce their exposure as much as possible."*

Are VA cemeteries open for burial and visitations?

Currently, all VA cemeteries are open for public burials and visitations. To schedule a burial, call 800-535-1117 (option 1).

However, the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration (NCA) understands that some families will wish to postpone the formal committal service until a later date. This can be arranged and the NCA will work to accommodate these preferences.

To make sure all staff and visitors stay healthy, the same guidelines remain in place as they do for other funeral services or public events. Refrain from handshaking and unnecessary physical contact, wash your hands often and stay home if you are sick.

The NCA will provide updates on the operating status of individual national cemeteries on its social media pages: <http://www.facebook.com/nationalcemeteries> and www.twitter.com/vanacemeteries.”

What other precautions can be taken at funeral or visitation services at this time?

If you attend a funeral or visitation service for someone who did not pass away from COVID-19 you will still likely notice some changes. In order to help slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, funeral homes will be implementing some new social distancing practices. These will help protect the health and safety of visitors, community and staff by maximizing the space between individuals. Even if these measures are not specifically mandated by the funeral home, they are still good precautions to take.

- Maintain spacing between individuals of approximately six feet.
- Avoid physical contact such as shaking hands, hugging or holding hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze.
- Give your name to a funeral home employee and allow them to write it for you in the guest book.
- Stay home if you have a fever over 100.4, respiratory symptoms, a runny nose, or any other flu like symptoms.

You are also encouraged you to extend your sympathies via the funeral home’s online guest book.