

Funeral Planning
GUIDE



Purpose of This Guide

Planning a funeral is a deeply personal and emotional matter. At Austin Funeral & Cremation Services we realize that this is a very difficult time for you and your family. Please know that we are here to help – in any way we can. It is our privilege to serve you, and our sincere hope that we help your family honor the life of your loved one in a meaningful and personal way.

When death occurs, grieving family members are usually confronted with dozens of decisions, all of which must be made quickly and under great emotional duress. Often people find themselves in a state of shock or numbness, not knowing what to do next or how to proceed. This guide was created to help your family know what to do when death occurs and what to expect in the funeral planning process. For your convenience, we encourage you to print this guide and make your own notes in the margins.

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What to Do Immediately Following Death

- 1.) **Determine Who to Call First.**
 - If someone dies **unexpectedly at home**, first call 911. The police and paramedics will come to your home and will either take your loved one to the hospital or if it is determined that death has already occurred, the police will work with the medical examiner to determine how to proceed.
 - If someone dies **at home under hospice care**, call the hospice nurse if he or she is not already present. The hospice nurse will be able to pronounce death and you will not need to notify the police.
 - If someone dies **at a hospital or medical facility**, the medical staff will usually assist you in notifying us when your loved one is ready to be released into our care.
- 2.) **Contact Austin Funeral & Cremation Services, (615) 377-0775.** We are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When your family is ready, we will send someone from our staff to take your loved one into our care. During this initial phone conversation you will:
 - Set up a time to make the funeral arrangements.
 - Decide if you would like your loved one to be embalmed. Embalming is not required, but always recommended if you would like to view the your loved one or have an open casket visitation.
- 3.) **Contact your minister or someone close to you for support.**
- 4.) **Alert immediate family members and close friends.**
- 5.) **If employed, contact your loved one's employer.**
- 6.) **Locate your loved one's important documents to be used while making funeral arrangements:**
 - Copy of funeral prearrangements
 - Deed to burial property
 - Military discharge papers (required to arrange military honors)
- 7.) **Meet with your funeral director to make arrangements.** Our directors would be glad to meet you in your home or a place that is convenient and comfortable for you. Or if you prefer, you may come to our offices in Brentwood. During this difficult time, it is important that you are in a place where you and your family are comfortable. Details about what to expect during this meeting are on the following page.
- 8.) **Select clothing if your loved one is going to be buried.**
- 9.) **Gather pictures.** Often families will request that we create a picture DVD to play at the visitation or during the service. Many families will also display framed pictures at the service.
- 10.) **Contact those you would like to participate in the service such as pallbearers or speakers.**
- 11.) **Ensure family members and close friends are notified about times of service.** Remember to also notify religious, fraternal, and civic organizations where your loved one was a member.
- 12.) **Take proper precautions to secure your home(s).** Unfortunately, burglaries can take place during visitations, funerals, and memorial services.

Making Funeral Arrangements

Arranging a funeral and final resting place for someone you love is never easy. There are endless decisions, details, and uncertainty. During this difficult time, it is our role to alleviate as much stress as possible. We will attentively listen to your needs, help guide you through the planning process, inform you of all of your options, and make sure services are carried out according to your family's wishes.

At your pace, we will help you plan how to best remember and memorialize your loved one. Please know that at any time while making these arrangements, you are free to ask questions, voice concerns, or discuss any subjects that come to mind, no matter how trivial they may seem. Remember that our role is to make this difficult time easier for you, while ensuring that your wishes are carried out promptly and correctly.

Decisions to Make

Our funeral directors will compassionately walk you through the planning process, providing guidance and support as you make the following decisions:

What kind of service would you like to have?

- Visitation? Funeral or memorial service?
- When and where would you like the service to be held?
- Who will be involved in the funeral or memorial service? Usually the minister officiating the service will work with your family on the order of service. If you would like special musicians such as a bagpipe player, or if your loved one served in the military and you would like to have military honors, we will arrange for this.
- Would you like pallbearers? If so, who?
- Who else would you like to participate in the service?
- Would your family like to have a reception following the service?
- Would you like to order flowers?
- If your loved one is going to be buried, would you like a formal funeral procession to the cemetery?

Would you like to have an obituary notice? (example on page 8)

- What information would you like to include in the obituary notice?
- Are there other out-of-town newspapers where you would like to run the notice?

What would you like to do with your loved one's body?

- Will your loved one be buried or cremated?
- If burial, in what cemetery would you like your loved one to be buried?
- If cremation, what would you like to do with the cremains? They may be buried, entombed, scattered, or placed in an urn to be kept by your family.

What kind of merchandise would you like to select?

- What type of casket, outer burial container (vault), or urn would you like?
- Would you like to order acknowledgement cards?
- Would you like to have a picture DVD created to keep or play at the service or visitation?

After these decisions have been made and all of your questions have been answered, our staff will work diligently to carry out your wishes.

Types of Services

The choices you make to celebrate the life of your loved one may be as simple or elaborate as you wish. There are many options with both traditional ground burial and cremation. We are here to help you select the best option for your family. The staff of Austin Funeral & Cremation Services will listen to your desires and customize each service according to your family's wishes. Following are several choices; however, keep in mind that each service can be customized. If there is some type of service or variation that you would like to have that is not listed, please let us know.

Visitation. Visitations provide a time and place for friends to offer their expressions of sorrow and sympathy to the family of the deceased. Depending on a family's wishes, the body of the deceased may or may not be present. Visitations usually take place prior to any type of service, but can be held after a service. Although visitations can sometimes be physically draining for families, most family members find great comfort in the support and kindness shown to them at the visitation.

Funeral Service. A funeral service is a ceremony commemorating the deceased **with a casket present** during the service. Pallbearers will escort the casket to the funeral coach and then proceed to the cemetery for a committal service and burial. Often families will choose to have a formal procession from the place of service to the cemetery.

Committal Service. A committal service takes place at the grave, usually following the funeral service. A brief passage of scripture and prayer are offered prior to the burial. Families may choose to leave after the committal service or may choose to stay while the casket is being lowered into the ground.

Graveside Service. The entire funeral service takes place at the grave. Oftentimes a graveside service is the choice of those who want a simple service. Some families will choose a graveside service for elderly family members who have outlived their peers. It is important to consider the weather and physical condition of those who will come to the service. For some, walking through a cemetery to get to the grave and then standing during the service might be more difficult than having a service in an indoor setting with plenty of seating. For others, a simple graveside service is the perfect way to honor their loved one.



Memorial Service. A memorial service is a ceremony commemorating the deceased **without a casket present** during the service. Some families choose to have a burial prior to the service. For families who have chosen cremation, a memorial service can take place either with or without an urn present.

Reception. Receptions are usually held after services, and are a time for friends and family to gather for a meal. This time gives everyone a chance to talk and share stories in a more relaxed setting. Sometimes friends will prepare food ahead of time for this gathering. Other times receptions will be held at restaurants, hotels, country clubs, or be catered at a park, church, or someone's home.

The staff of Austin Funeral & Cremation Services will arrange for services to be held at the location of your choice. We encourage each family to select a setting where they feel comfortable, such as a place that holds special meaning to their loved one. For many, this will be in their home church. We can assist you in recommending, selecting, and securing a location if you are uncertain of the best setting.

Unique Ideas for Services

Funeral services can and should be as unique as the life that is being celebrated. Over the years we have found that the most meaningful services were those that were most personal. There are many ways to add personal touches to funeral and memorial services, and our staff can arrange or assist with any of these:

- **Display Pictures.** Display framed pictures at the visitation and/or service.
- **Video Tribute.** Have a picture DVD created to play at the visitation and/or service. It can be set to a favorite music selection(s) or traditional hymns.
- **Participation from Family & Friends.** Ask friends or family members to participate in the service. They could read a favorite scripture passage, quote, or poem of your loved one. Another idea is to read something your loved one wrote that embodies who he or she was.
- **Musicians.** Arrange for special musicians such as a bagpipe payer, harpist, pianist, violinist, organist, or vocalist.
- **Military Honors.** If your loved one served in the armed forces, arrange for military honors.
- **Unique Processional.** Plan a special route to the cemetery (stop by an old home, school, or park). If your loved one was a firefighter or other type of serviceman or woman, have the funeral procession led by the respective vehicle.
- **Encourage Others to Share Memories.** Set out note cards at the visitation and/or service so people can write comments or share stories with your family.
- **Parting Gifts.** Provide parting gifts to those who come to the service. This could be your loved one's favorite recipe, a packet of flower seeds to plant in his or her memory, or a personalized bookmark with your loved one's picture and favorite quote or scripture passage.
- **Symbolic Ceremony at the Cemetery.** At the cemetery, arrange for a dove, butterfly, or balloon release.
- **Reception.** After the services, have a reception and invite friends and relatives. During this time, share stories or fond memories of your loved one.



Burial Options

A burial may take place either before or after funeral services, depending on your preference. Some families have found it comforting to have the burial first, and then conduct services to celebrate their loved one's life following the burial. Yet, many people still prefer the traditional funeral service, with a processional and burial to follow. The decision is completely up to you.

When choosing traditional burial or mausoleum entombment, you will need to select a grave or mausoleum space in addition to a monument or marker. Below is a listing of area cemeteries. The staff of Austin Funeral & Cremation Services is accustomed to working with any of the local cemeteries, and can make arrangements with out-of-town cemeteries as well. If you would like assistance in selecting cemetery property or information on other burial options, our staff would be glad to assist you.

Calvary Cemetery

1001 Lebanon Road
Nashville, TN 37210
(615) 256-4590

Mount Olivet Cemetery

1101 Lebanon Road
Nashville, TN 37210
(615) 255-4193

Christ Church Memorial Gardens

15354 Old Hickory Boulevard
Nashville, TN 37211
(615) 834-6171

Williamson Memorial Gardens

3009 Columbia Avenue
Franklin, TN 37064
(615) 371-9200

Harpeth Hills Memory Gardens

9090 Highway 100
Nashville, TN 37221
(615) 646-9292

Woodlawn Memorial Park

660 Thompson Lane
Nashville, TN 37204
(615) 383-4754

Middle Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery

(for veterans, spouses, and dependent children only)
7931 McCrory Lane
Nashville, TN 37221
(615) 532-2238

Cremation Options

When choosing cremation, you have all the same choices for services that you would have with a burial; the only difference is the final disposition. Cremation offers a variety of choices, from a simple gathering to a traditional ceremony with the body present. Some families choose to have the cremation take place after a funeral service, so that their loved one's body can be present during the visitation and funeral service. Other families choose to have the cremation done prior to services and have the cremated remains present at the memorial service. No matter what you choose, we will help create an experience that fits the needs of you and your family.

Cremated remains may be buried in the ground, placed in a columbarium or mausoleum, scattered, or kept by your family. Some people will purchase keepsake urns so that several family members can keep a portion of the cremains. Others will purchase one decorative urn and keep the cremains on a bookshelf or mantel. Some families find comfort in scattering the cremains in a place that holds special meaning to the family. And like the traditional ground burial, some families enjoy coming back to the cemetery or columbarium to remember their loved one and pay their respects.

Obituary Notice

Obituaries usually include some or all of the following information but may be written in the format of your choice. Part of our service is submitting the obituary to the newspaper(s), and we also provide assistance in writing the obituary. *The Tennessean* charges \$9.52 per column inch. Newspapers in smaller towns and rural areas often do not charge for obituaries.

- Photograph
- Name
- Date of death
- Age
- Those who preceded your loved one in death
- Survivors
- Biographical information
- Accomplishments
- Community involvement
- Characteristics (how your loved one will be remembered)
- Times of the services
- Minister officiating the service
- Active pallbearers
- Honorary pallbearers
- Place of burial
- Memorial contributions

Example Obituary

Rick Austin

Brentwood, TN

William Richard "Rick" Austin passed away on November 4, 2007 at the age of 59. Rick is survived by his wife of 28 years, Carol; twin daughters, Kate and Liz; parents, Milton and Libby Austin; sister and brother-in-law, Jane and Marty Duncan and nieces Emmy and Allie.

In addition to over 35 years of funeral service, he was active in the community as a deacon of Brentwood Baptist Church, past president of the Kiwanis Club of Nashville, member of the Brentwood Cool Springs Chamber of Commerce, and graduate of Leadership Brentwood. He also served on the boards of the Brentwood Cool Springs Chamber, Better Business Bureau and American Diabetes Association.

Rick will be remembered as a loving husband, father, and son, cherished friend, avid golfer, and respected funeral director who took pride in caring for the families of our community. He touched the hearts of many and was a true blessing to all who knew him.

To celebrate his life, Dr. Michael L. Glenn will conduct a service at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, November 7th at Brentwood Baptist Church. His family will receive friends on Tuesday, November 6th from 4-7 p.m. at the church. Active pallbearers are John Gering, Paul Rutledge, Larry Beadle, Bryan Smith, Doug Raines, David Bourgeois, Kevin O'Brien, Alton Morgan, Jerry Krohn, John Chapman, George Armistead, Don Whitley, Ellis Galyon, and Overton Smith. Honorary pallbearers are Rick's Sunday School class and the Kiwanis Club of Nashville. Burial will follow the funeral service at Harpeth Hills Memory Gardens.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Deacon Ministry of Brentwood Baptist Church, 7777 Concord Road, Brentwood, TN 37027 or The American Diabetes Association, 4205 Hillsboro Pike, Nashville, TN 37215. An online guestbook is available at AustinFuneralService.com. (615)377-0775.

Death Certificate

Our services include preparing and filing the death certificate with the county clerk, and obtaining certified copies that you will use to settle your loved one's claims. As a general rule, any time funds are being dispersed you will need to submit a certified copy of the death certificate. Insurance companies, social security administration, investment companies, and banks will all usually require certified copies. Credit card, mortgage, and utility companies will usually accept a copy of the certified death certificate.

The number of certified copies you need depends on the number of investments and accounts that were in your loved one's name. Most families request between 5 and 10.

Your funeral director will collect the following information about your loved one to prepare the death certificate:

- Full Legal Name (first, middle, maiden, last)
- Home Address
- Social Security Number
- Date of Birth
- Place of Birth (city, state)
- Was he/she in the Armed Forces?
- Highest Level of Education Attained
- Marital Status
- Race/Ethnicity
- Occupation and Industry
- Father's Full Name
- Mother's Full Name



Tips for Grieving Families

When someone you love dies, it is often difficult to know what to do or how to deal with your grief. The following are some guidelines to help you through the funeral planning process and beyond.

- 1.) **Keep family and friends close to you** for love and support. You are not alone and people want to help. Let them.
- 2.) **Resist the urge to rush through everything.** Often when someone dies, there is a sense of urgency to have the funeral or memorial service the following day. Give yourself time to grieve, remember, share stories, go through pictures, and plan and prepare for these special services. It is not unusual to have services a few days after death has occurred.
- 3.) As you are thinking about what to include in the obituary notice, think about how you would like your loved one to be remembered. In a sentence or two, try to **capture the essence of who he or she was in the obituary in addition to listing accomplishments or organizations.** Your funeral director will help write and submit the obituary.
- 4.) **Be sure that all family members are in agreement with how the services will be handled** – before, during, and after the services. This is a highly emotional time for everyone, and it's important for families to communicate and be in agreement with one another. If the entire family is supposed to arrive to the visitation early for a private family viewing, or if everyone is supposed to meet at a central location and ride together, be sure to communicate these details.
- 5.) **Communicate with your spouse, family, and children** about decisions being made so that they do not feel left out or alone. Often when people become wrapped up in the funeral planning process, those closest to them end up feeling neglected and left alone to deal with their grief.
- 6.) **Consider having a reception or gathering** after the funeral or memorial service. It will provide a special time to share a meal with family and friends while supporting one another after the services.



Local Support Groups

Grief Share – (615) 324-6269

GriefShare is a friendly, caring group of people who will walk alongside you through one of life's most difficult experiences. GriefShare seminars and support groups are led by people who understand what you are going through and want to help. Each week groups will watch a video seminar featuring top experts on grief and recovery subjects. Brentwood Baptist Church is one of the many locations where groups meet. Please contact Gayle Haywood at Brentwood Baptist Church or visit the GriefShare website to find a group near you. griefshare.org

Alive Grief Support Services – (615) 963-4732

Alive Grief Support Services is a comprehensive program that addresses the needs that arise following the death of a loved one. This organization has professional grief counselors and trained volunteers to guide individuals (and groups) through the process of mourning. They also offer bereavement camps for children and those grieving during the holidays. Brentwood United Methodist Church hosts one of the various support groups in Nashville. Please visit the website or call for a full listing of locations and services. alivehospice.org/services-support.php

Praying the Psalms of Lament – (615) 298-9502 or (615) 383-1815

Praying the Psalms of Lament is a grief support group for adults that explore the emotional impact of grief, healthy responses to grief, and spiritual resources for the journey through grief. Please contact Sandra Randleman at First Presbyterian Church Nashville for more information.

Women of Hope – (615) 599-6043

Women of Hope is an ongoing ministry of encouragement, comfort, support, and guidance to women who are dealing with the loss of their husbands. This group meets the fourth Saturday of each month at Brentwood Baptist Church. Special guests address topics of interest which offer inspiration and encouragement to attendees. Open to widows of all ages in the community. Please contact Barbara Farrow for more information.

The Compassionate Friends – (615) 356-4823 or (615) 385-8345

The Compassionate Friends is a self-help organization offering friendship and understanding to bereaved parents. This group is open to parents who are grieving the death of a child of any age. They meet the second Sunday of each month at 3 p.m. at the HCA building north of Centennial Park. compassionatefriends.org

Concluding Remarks

It is our sincere hope that this guide has been a helpful resource for you. We understand that making these arrangements is at best difficult and want you to know that we are here to help in any way we can. When you meet with us to make final arrangements, our directors will walk you through each step of the planning process, at your own pace, and together we will make decisions and plan services that bring honor to your loved one.

If you are using this guide as a resource before death has occurred, you are wise to be thinking and planning ahead. Many families have found the benefits of pre-planning very helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like one of our directors to meet with you to discuss arrangements. We would be honored to walk you through the planning process.

On the following pages you will find a Survivor's Checklist. Most, if not all, of these items can be taken care of after the services. Again, please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns. We are here to serve you.



5115 Maryland Way Brentwood, Tennessee 37027

Phone: 615.377.0775

contact@AustinFuneralService.com

AustinFuneralService.com

Survivor's Checklist – What to Do After the Services

- Send acknowledgement cards for flowers, donations, food, or any significant gestures of kindness. Also remember to thank pallbearers.
- Alert the executor of your loved one's will.
- File claims with life insurance companies.
- Notify attorney regarding the probate of the estate.
- Meet with an accountant to discuss estate taxes.
- Contact Social Security Administration and other government offices that may have been making payments to your loved one. If decedent was your spouse, inquire about your eligibility for new benefits.
- Contact your loved one's employer and inquire about any 401(k), pension, or company benefits that you or your loved one is entitled to.
- If your loved one was a veteran, contact the Veterans Administration and inquire about benefits that you may be entitled to through the VA.
- Alert post office to forward your loved one's mail (if applicable).
- Locate important documents that will be necessary for the settlement of the estate:
 - Will
 - Birth Certificate
 - Social Security Card
 - Marriage License
 - Real Estate Deeds and Titles
 - Stock Certificates
 - Loan Paperwork
 - Bank and Retirement Account Statements
 - Tax Returns
- File any outstanding claims for health insurance or Medicare benefits.
- Notify the Registrar of Voters.
- Notify your loved one's bank or credit union. If you had joint accounts, you will need to remove your loved one's name from the account.
- If your loved one's home is unoccupied, cancel all unnecessary services such as newspaper delivery, cable or internet service, etc.
- Contact the Department of Motor Vehicles to cancel your loved one's drivers license and transfer titles of all registered vehicles.
- Advise all creditors in writing that death has occurred.

Survivor's Checklist (Continued)

- Notify all 3 credit reporting agencies (contact information is below).
- Obtain a current copy of your loved one's credit report.
- Cancel your loved one's prescriptions.
- Change ownership of assets and lines of credit.
- Update your will.
- Update beneficiaries on your life insurance policies, if necessary.
- Remove your loved one from marketing and mailing lists. You may list your loved one's name on the Deceased Do Not Call List which is maintained by the Direct Marketing Association. Visit [ims-dm.com/cgi/ddnc](https://www.ims-dm.com/cgi/ddnc) for more information.
- Organize and distribute your loved one's belongings.

Important Contact Information

Government Offices

Department of Veteran's Affairs - 1-800-827-1000

Social Security Administration - 1-800-772-1213

Credit Reporting Agencies

Equifax - 1-800-685-1111

TransUnion- 1-800-888-4213

Experian - 1-888-397-3742



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