

COVID-19 Funeral Guidance

Guiding Principle

To maintain our tradition of honoring, respecting and taking care of our people and our beliefs, we will practice Ch'eghwtsen' to adapt to the challenges and ever changing world we live in, and ensure our people continue to thrive.

RECOMMENDED SAFE PRACTICES FOR THE SERVICE AND GATHERING

- If anyone has symptoms – They should **NOT** attend and they should get tested.
- If anyone has a recent close contact with a positive COVID-19 case or someone with symptoms – They should **NOT** attend the gathering and they should get tested.
- If possible, limit visitation to groups of individual households – AVOID mixing households in enclosed spaces.
- **WEAR** a mask even if you are vaccinated and especially if you are not vaccinated.
- Do not eat meals with people outside your household.
- Limit attendees from outside the village – with high rates of transmission in the state currently this places remote villages at high risk for introducing COVID-19 into their community.

Supporting the Family

- Call the family - Elders suggested using telephones, walkie talkie or radio
- **AVOID** in person contact
- **AVOID** hugs or handshakes

Food Sharing

- **AVOID** sharing food (This may require potlatches to be postponed)

Visitation

- Limit to single households at one time in the building.
- Try to maintain 6 feet of distance, whether inside or outside.
- Avoid physical contact with the deceased as much as possible.
- Use gloves and a mask.*
- If outside, utilize a canopy to protect the body from the elements as necessary.

Funeral

- Hold a larger service or memorial, after COVID-19 clears.
- Do not travel from village to village.
- Hold the funeral service outside rather than inside to avoid close quarters contact indoors
- Provide hand washing and hand sanitization station.
- Maintain 6 feet of distance.
- Transport coffin on a sled, truck or trailer to avoid close contact by pallbearers longer than required.
- Attendees and pallbearers wear masks and gloves.*
- Provide individual copies of hymns to gravesite singers and musicians and ensure 10 feet of distance as required by the State.
- After returning home, attendees should follow mask and glove removal procedure and wash clothes thoroughly.

Handling the Deceased

- Use full PPE if handling the deceased, including washing and dressing the deceased.
- Deceased can be buried or cremated - The National Funeral Directors Association and the CDC state that burials do not pose a higher risk of virus exposure than cremation.
- The State recommends using a body bag liner and body bag, or two body bags. Wipe the outside of the body bag with CaviWipes or an EPA approved cleaner for COVID-19.
- When grave digging, limit the number of people, wear masks, and maintain 6 feet of distance.
- When casket building, limit the number of people, wear masks, and maintain 6 feet of distance.
- Pallbearers should wear masks and gloves at all times.*

Mask and glove removal procedure: Remove gloves and wash hands, then remove mask and wash hands again.

** Recommendations compiled from Elders, the State of Alaska, the National Funeral Directors Association and the President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America – 30 days to slow the spread.

QUESTIONS? Contact safety@tananachiefs.org