

Chapter 7

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

1. Purpose. This chapter establishes guidelines for the provision of funeral arrangements at no cost to the Department for children who die while in the Department's custody or in the care of its designee, and for young adults who die while in the Extended Foster Care, Postsecondary Education Services and Support, or Aftercare programs.

2. Scope. This chapter is applicable in all cases where existing resources are not available to pay for funerals and final expenses of a child who dies while in the Department's custody or in the care of the Department's designee, or a young adult who dies while in the Extended Foster Care, Postsecondary Education Services and Support, or Aftercare programs.

3. Explanation of Terms. For purposes of this operating procedure, the following definitions will apply:

a. "Child" means any unmarried person under the age of 18 years who has not been emancipated by order of the court and who has been found to be dependent and is in the Department's custody or in the care of the Department's designee. This includes children in shelter status who have not yet been adjudicated.

b. "Designee" means a person, contractual provider or other agency or entity named by the Department.

c. "Department" means the State of Florida Department of Children and Families.

d. "Member(s)" means the members of the Florida Cemetery, Cremation, and Funeral Association ("FCCFA") and their respective funeral establishment.

e. "Young adult" means an individual who has attained 18 years of age but who has not attained 21 years of age (or 22, if disabled), who is in Extended Foster Care, and/or an individual who has attained 18 years of age but who has not attained 23 years of age, who is in the Road to Independence programs, including Postsecondary Education Services and Support and Aftercare.

4. General. The purpose of this chapter is to ensure culturally appropriate funeral arrangements are made and carried out for children and young adults who die while in the custody of the Department or the care of its designee and who do not have family members, a client welfare trust fund, or other resources to pay the cost of funeral and burial arrangements. The Florida Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (FCCFA) historically has aided the Department in identifying funeral homes that may be able to assist with services for those families who cannot afford a funeral.

a. The FCCFA does not directly provide funding for the service or burial of a child or young adult.

b. The FCCFA attempts to locate members of its association who are able to provide low or no-cost services to the families in need of assistance within the scope of this operating procedure. In some instances, the FCCFA may not be able to identify a member in the vicinity of the deceased who is able to provide low or no-cost services.

5. Procedure.

a. Any time a child or young adult who is in the custody of the Department or the care of its designee dies, the case manager or case manager supervisor of the deceased child or young adult shall immediately notify the biological parent of the death of the child or young adult. In cases that involve a child whose parents' rights have been terminated, the case manager and case manager supervisor shall decide on a case-by-case basis whether to notify the biological parent.

b. The deceased child or young adult's case manager or supervisor shall determine whether the family has the resources to pay the funeral expenses as soon as possible. Immediately upon determining whether the family has the resources, the respective regional Family and Community Services Director or designee will be contacted and provided with this information.

c. If the parents or caregivers do not have the necessary financial resources, the respective regional Family and Community Services Director or designee shall call the FCCFA office in Tallahassee at (800) 226-3332 during regular working hours. Regular working hours of the FCCFA are Monday through Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Friday 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 pm. On weekends or after hours a message can be left at the main number or an e-mail can be sent to jbrewton@executiveoffice.org and the FCCFA will make contact the next business day.

d. FCCFA will send the FCCFA Foster Child Funeral Program form to the respective regional Family and Community Services Director or designee. Once the form is completed and received by the FCCFA office in Tallahassee, the FCCFA will begin to identify members of FCCFA that are:

- (1) In close proximity to the deceased foster child or young adult; and,
- (2) Able to provide low or no-cost services to the family.

e. Once an FCCFA member is identified and is able to provide such services, the FCCFA will provide the contact information of the case worker to the funeral establishment(s) that has offered to assist. From that point forward, the case worker or agency coordinator and the funeral establishment will coordinate the remainder of the process, including but not limited to the release of the body, funeral arrangements and burial/cremation information.

f. Family participation in such activities as providing clothing, scheduling of services and provision of clergy will be coordinated with the local funeral director through the regional Family and Community Services Director or designee. If the religious affiliation of the biological parents is unknown and cannot be reasonably determined, the religious affiliation of the foster parents may be used in the selection of the clergy.

g. The Office of Child Welfare shall ensure that the FCCFA's executive director is provided with an updated listing of the regional Family and Community Services directors.

h. If the Department, designee, or family member of the deceased child or young adult has already begun speaking with a funeral establishment(s) about any arrangements for death prior to contacting the FCCFA, the FCCFA has the right to decline all assistance within the scope of this operating procedure.