

“How to Choose a Funeral Home”

In the past, most people chose a funeral home for the following reasons: they had a relationship with the funeral home before, the perceived ethnicity of a funeral home, the location of the funeral home or upon the recommendation of a friend.

Most local, independent funeral homes rely upon their reputation for success. They have been operated by the same family from generation to generation and have been successful because they have built a business based on trust. With various mergers and acquisitions occurring in our industry, it is important that you choose a family owned funeral home where the family cares about your needs.

The reasons for choosing a particular funeral home are now changing. Many people should address whether the funeral home they used before has had a change of ownership; this might translate into whether the service standards have changed or whether the ethnicity of the ownership has changed. However, every funeral home should be capable of addressing each family's religious needs and provide a service that is meaningful to each family. Some funeral homes are better than others in going the extra mile to provide a personalized tribute to a life that was lived.

Sometimes people choose a funeral home based on their location, however the most convenient location may not be the best suited for your needs or a good value. You should visit various funeral homes to see whether their facilities are up to date, whether they offer a variety of options based upon your budget and whether they are willing to offer a personalized service to the life of the person. There should be plenty of parking and the building should be handicapped accessible. You can often get a feel for a particular funeral home by accessing their website. The website should provide a description of the funeral home as well information about the variety of services they offer. Many of your questions will be answered directly on the website or you can contact the funeral home by email for more specific requests.

You should not choose a funeral home based on price alone. All funeral homes are mandated by law to give you a General Price List before you begin to talk about any type of arrangements you will make. Therefore you can select the services that are right for your family. A good funeral home will take into consideration your family circumstances and offer recommendations. Choosing a funeral home on price alone may shortchange you on the special care and service you need to receive.

It is also very important to make sure that the funeral home is a member of a professional organization such as the Connecticut Funeral Director's Association on a local basis, or NFDA, OGR or NSM to name a few on the national level. These are associations of funeral homes that have pledged to abide by a certain set of ethical standards and guidelines.

While a funeral home can be truly beautiful, it is the willingness of the funeral staff to insure that the funeral of your loved one be meaningful to you. The funeral staff should

be attentive and provide compassion and support since you will be with them for a few intense days. You should always get the feeling that they will take care of your loved one just as you took care of them in life. You should also be able to relate to the funeral director who will handle the arrangements and be able to speak frankly about what you want. No request by you should go unfulfilled. Ask whether the funeral home offers concierge services, i.e. assisting with ordering flowers, arranging accommodations for out of state relatives, reserving a restaurant or catering facility for a family reception, or helping with any other need that may arise.

Losing a person so dearly loved is one of the most difficult times of anyone's life. Usually the time after the funeral is over is the hardest of the mourning period. See if the funeral home is able to provide support information so that a grieving family member can begin the grieving process. In addition, the funeral home should be able to recommend specific support organizations where people can go to learn about coping with their loss whether it is with a private therapist who specializes in grief issues or with a support group.

Our society has so many options for every aspect of our lives. The funeral industry is no different. As a smart consumer, it is our own responsibility to research our options. We will continue discussing the elements of funerals next month with topics such as preplanning a funeral, imaginative services, green burials, and other issues as well.