

A misty mountain landscape with birds flying in the sky. The scene is captured in a soft, ethereal light, likely at dawn or dusk, with a color palette transitioning from warm oranges and yellows at the top to cool blues and purples at the bottom. Several birds are silhouetted against the sky, appearing to fly across the frame. The mountains in the background are shrouded in a light mist, creating a sense of depth and tranquility.

On the Loss of Your Loved One

BEREAVEMENT AND AFTER DEATH RESOURCES



ALASKA NATIVE
TRIBAL HEALTH
CONSORTIUM

Staff at the Alaska Native Medical Center offer our heartfelt condolences to you for your loss, and we are committed to continued support as you experience this difficult time that is a part of every journey.

Thank you for entrusting us with the care of your loved one.

We understand that things can feel very overwhelming and you may have more questions than answers. Reach out to friends and family that can assist you. We offer the following tips as a guide.

Before You Leave ANMC

1. Please take the opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns with the patient care team.
2. Collect valuables and all personal items belonging to the deceased.
3. Grief support at ANMC
 - If you or other family members would like immediate counseling for grief and loss, our Behavioral Urgent Response Team can be called upon your request.
 - If there are young children who may need grief support, please let the Nurse know. Our Child Life Specialists are available to assist.
 - Spiritual support is available by request.
 - ANMC welcomes your preference of clergy members, or a selection can be made from our list of on-call contacts. Staff can contact your request accordingly.
 - Let staff know if you have any special requests that the spiritual affiliate should be aware of, such as, communion and other rituals.
4. Make plans for final arrangements of the deceased
 - If transportation or other accommodations are needed, please discuss with staff.
 - *Choose a local funeral home* that you would like to care for your loved one (a list of funeral homes can be provided for your convenience). *Contact the funeral home* to give the authorization for pick up and transport of remains. Inform the staff of the funeral home you have chosen.
 - *If you or another family member will be taking custody of the remains*, transporting and / or arranging transport, please see the *Burial Transit Permit information (document provided on request)*.

If you are experiencing a perinatal loss or the loss of a child, please know there are additional resources that may be helpful to you and your family. Ask a member of your care team to provide these items.

After Leaving the Hospital

Contact the funeral home you have chosen to set up an appointment as soon as possible.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS TO COLLECT (if applicable)

- Insurance Policies
- Military-related documents (DDF 214; Records of Military service; VA Enrollment)
- Apply for veteran's benefits, military retirement benefits
- Marriage certificate
- Birth certificates for dependent children
- Native corporation / Tribal benefits documents
- Notify employer of the deceased regarding employee/survivor benefits
- Contact Social Security to inquire about survivor benefits

OTHER THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Identify bills that may require immediate attention
- Contact banks and other financial institutions
- Contact creditors (mortgages, loans, credit cards, etc.) bearing the name of the deceased
- Contact legal as needed to address Wills, Power of Attorney, Executor and other legal matters
- Contact an accountant for tax advice and services

Frequently Asked Questions

Burial and Other Arrangements

Is a casket required for burial or cremation in Alaska?

- *No law requires a casket for burial nor cremation.* However, you should check with the cemetery, which may require a certain type of container for burial.
- Federal Law requires that the funeral home or crematory inform you that you can use an alternative container, and that they make such containers available to you
- Federal Law requires funeral homes to accept caskets that consumers have purchased from other sources (online retailers; or you may build your own custom casket) if it is made of acceptable material.

Where can ashes be stored or scattered after cremation?

- In Alaska, there are no laws governing where you may keep or scatter ashes. Cremation renders ashes harmless, so there is no public health risk involved. *Use mindful and lawful judgement.*
- **Scattering ashes on private land** – Make sure you have landowner's permission.
- **Scattering ashes on public land** – Check local and regional government regulations and zoning rules.
- **Scattering ashes on federal land** - Keep distance away from trails, roads, waterways, facilities. Also, check *National Park Service website.*
- **Scattering ashes at sea** – Contact the EPA representative in Alaska or see *“BURIAL OF HUMAN REMAINS at SEA” on the EPA website.*
- **Scattering ashes by air** – Cremains are not considered hazardous material by federal aviation laws, therefore, can be scattered as long as ashes are removed from their container before scattering. Do not scatter ashes in front of or near airplane's engine.

Can I bury human remains on my private property?

- The State of Alaska does not have a state law that prohibits burial on private property.
- The Municipality of Anchorage has local ordinances prohibiting the burial of human remains except in an approved cemetery. Contact your local or regional government office or a local funeral home/ mortuary for information on burial of human remains outside of the Municipality of Anchorage.
- For more information on burial, see *“Burial Plots on Private Property” published by the Alaska Division of Environmental Conservation.*

Is embalming required in Alaska?

- There are no laws requiring a body to be embalmed in Alaska. However, the State of Alaska Department of Health recommends embalming if the remains cannot reach its destination within 24 hours of death.
- Embalming is commonly used, but consult with your funeral home of choice for options.
- Human remains shipped into or outside of Alaska must be embalmed. The funeral home is required to obtain a Burial Transit Permit before transporting a body into or outside of Alaska [Alaska Statutes 18.50.250].

Do funeral homes honor Alaska Native or American Indian customs in caring for the remains?

- All funeral homes will honor Native customs/ritual traditions for caring of your loved one. Inform the funeral home, *as early as possible*, of what you and your family desire.

Travel Arrangements

What is needed to transport the remains of my loved one?

Per *7Alaska Administrative Code 35.100 / 05.460*, a Burial Transit Permit is required for all of the following conditions:

- Moving the remains within Alaska
- Shipping the remains out of Alaska, provided that all requirements related to embalming and transport container are fulfilled
- Storing or holding the body for a period of greater than 72 hours after death
- Transporting remains on common carrier, private vehicle or chartered carrier

Normally, the person who assumes custody of the remains is responsible for obtaining, completing, and registering the Burial Transit Permit with the Bureau of Vital Statistics. However, ANMC's Medical Records Department can assist families that are not using a funeral home to obtain, complete, and register the Burial Transit Permit. They are available Monday-Friday, 8:00 am-5:00 pm, in the Inuit Building at 4141 Ambassador Drive, Suite 118, at 907-729-3019 or aka-transcription@anthc.org. If your family is not using a funeral home and you need a Burial Transit Permit after-hours, on a weekend, or on a holiday, please contact our House Supervisors who are available 24/7 by calling the main ANMC phone number at 907-563-2662.

- If a Funeral Home assumes custody of the remains, they will obtain a Burial Transit Permit.
- If the Bureau of Vital Statistics is closed and/or you would like assistance with this process, the ANMC House Supervisor can complete and sign the Burial Transit Permit. The ANMC House Supervisor is available 24/7 by calling the main ANMC phone number at 907-563-2662. Then, the ANMC House Supervisor will give the person who is assuming custody of the remains a copy, email a copy to ANMC Medical Record at _aka-transcription@anthc.org (email), and send a copy to ANMC Medical Records via intra-hospital mail. ANMC Medical Records will submit the Burial Transit Permit to Bureau of Vital Statistics.

A copy of the Burial Transit Permit is available in these locations:

- health.alaska.gov/dph/VitalStats/Pages/btp.aspx (for additional information)
- anthc.org/bereavement
- Appendix 1 of this booklet

How do I get remains to home location from ANMC?

- All transport of human remains requires a Burial Transit Permit (see section above).
- Transport of remains back to home location is a personal expense. The funeral home (if one is chosen) will discuss and assist with logistics.
- A common carrier or private charter may be used for transport. Check with airlines regarding embalming requirements.
- The funeral home will share information regarding funding sources (as available) and transport options.
- No embalming is required, if transported to destination within 24 hours after death. A private vehicle may be used if feasible.
- ANMC will provide a body bag.

This information has been gathered to guide you, but consult with authorities or funeral home for most accurate information.

Who pays for the authorized escort's travel back home?

- If your loved one is Medicaid eligible and was traveling on a current Medicaid travel authorization and passes away while in the process of receiving care in the hospital, Medicaid will cover the cost of the escort's travel back home. Medicaid requires that the escort travel home within 24 hours of the death.
- If travel is not covered by Medicaid, other insurance, ANMC, or the patient's Tribal Health Organization, return travel for escort will be at their own expense.
- For patients that lived in the Anchorage Service Unit, ANMC's Travel Management Office (TMO) may be contacted for assistance on a case by case basis with escort's return travel at 1-866-824-8140 or by calling their main line at 907-729-7720.

Other Information

How and when will I get the death certificate?

- Discuss with the funeral home your need for the death certificate. Once the funeral home has the information needed, they will initiate the Death Certificate and send it to the attending provider for signature. The funeral home will then have your loved one's death recorded at the Bureau of Vital Statistics and will obtain certified copies. You should let the funeral home know how many certified copies you will need early in the planning phase.
 - Keep in mind that financial institutions, Tribal organizations, insurance companies and others may all need copies to access accounts and financial assistance.
 - If additional certified copies are needed, you can obtain them from the Bureau of Vital Statistics. The cost is \$25 per copy.
- The process of getting the Death Certificate can take up to 4-6 weeks, however, the funeral home can provide Verification of Death Letter that can be presented in place of the Death Certificate until it is received.
 - If you choose not to use a funeral home and need a copy of the Nursing Expiration Record, please contact ANMC Medical Records at 907-729-3012.
- If you choose not to use a funeral home, contact the Bureau of Vital Statistics to obtain the Death Certificate(s). The Bureau of Vital Statistics is located inside University Center DMV, 3901 Old Seward Hwy, Suite 101, Anchorage. Phone numbers are (907) 269-0991 (Anchorage) or (907) 456-3391 (Juneau) and (907) 269-0991 (Anch Fax). The office is open Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
 - If you need further assistance, you may contact ANMC Medical Records at 907-729-3012. They cannot provide copies of the Death Certificate, but they can help you in this process.
- If your loved one did not pass at ANMC, then you need to talk to the local clinic or hospital in the community where they pass and see if they have already started the death certificate process with the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

Where can I get financial assistance?

- Visit anthc.org/bereavement to find a list of Financial Assistance resources available. Examples of resources available include:
 - Veterans Affairs assistance: 1-800-827-1000 or www.cem.va.gov/benvba.htm. For non-service-related deaths, beneficiary is allotted \$300 for funeral expenses and \$300 for burial cost outside of a National Cemetery. You will need the veteran's DDF-214.
 - Tribal organizations: Funds may be available for Tribal members or shareholders of Alaska Native corporations.

Understand Your Grief and Healthy Ways to Manage

Grief is an individual response.

- Give yourself permission to grieve in your own way. There is no time limit.
- Grief can affect your physical health. Continue taking care of yourself by drinking water, eating healthy foods and avoiding excess alcohol or other substances.
- Shock, denial, guilt, sadness and depression are normal reactions in response to grief and loss. Seek professional help to assist you in working through these difficult emotions, if needed.
- Holding back emotions can be harmful. Thoughts of self-harm, a prolonged panic state, feelings of hopelessness and sadness are medical emergencies – contact your health care provider for immediate help.
 - The Alaska Careline has crisis response available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 988 from any phone to reach someone to talk to.

Sadness can affect our lives in negative ways. Please note suggestions below that might help to heal the spirit and uplift the soul.

- Acknowledge feelings and limitations. Accept that there are things you cannot change.
- Find a creative outlet. Engaging in traditional activities, art or other things that you enjoy doing can help bring important balance to life.
- Invest in healthy relationships. Surround yourself with people or things that give you strength.
- Remember holidays and anniversaries to honor your loved one in your own special way.
- Believe in a less painful tomorrow.
- Meet life's challenges with purpose and meaning. Volunteer to assist others, engage in spiritual fellowship, exercise, meditation, or more time with friends and family. Do things that help you exchange sadness for joy.

ANTHC Behavioral Health Wellness Clinic offers behavioral health counseling for individuals or group sessions for all Tribal health beneficiaries regardless of where you live.

- Call 1-833-642-2492, or
- Ask your provider for a referral, or
- Visit anthc.org/bhwc to fill out an intake form.

Other Resources Available from ANMC Staff on Request

Burial Transit Permit
Funeral Homes List
Burial Assistance Resources
Tribal Burial Assistance Resources
Support Services



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1 (855) 482-4382 | (907) 563-ANMC

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