

# Funeral Home Manager

## Snapshot

**Career Cluster(s):** Business, Management & Administration; Health Science; Human Services

**Interests:** Helping others; organization; business

**Earnings (Yearly Average):** \$76,350

**Employment & Outlook:** Decline Expected

## OVERVIEW

### Sphere of Work

Funeral service workers organize and manage the details of a ceremony honoring a deceased person. Funeral home managers oversee the general operations of a funeral home business and may own the business themselves. They perform a variety of duties, such as planning and allocating the resources of the funeral home, managing staff, and handling marketing and public relations.

### Work Environment

Funeral services traditionally take place in a house of worship, in a funeral home, or at a gravesite or crematory. However, some families prefer to hold the service in their home or in a social center. Most funeral service workers are employed full-time, and some work more than 40 hours per week. They are often on call;



A funeral director receives guests at a viewing. Photo via iStock.com/RichLegg. [Used under license.]

irregular hours, including evenings and weekends are common.

### **Occupation Interest**

Individuals drawn to funeral service work strive to provide a respectful and tasteful service to the family members and loved ones of deceased persons. They must be willing to work irregular hours to meet their obligations and always be courteous and compassionate. They also have strong business skills and are able to offer their services profitably.

### **A Day in the Life—Duties and Responsibilities**

Funeral service workers help to determine the locations, dates, and times of visitations (wakes), funerals or memorial services, burials, and cremations. They

#### ***Duties and Responsibilities***

- Offering counsel and comfort to families and friends of the deceased
- Providing information on funeral service options
- Arranging for removal of the deceased's body
- Preparing the remains (the deceased's body) for the funeral
- Filing death certificates and other legal documents with appropriate authorities

also may help resolve insurance claims, apply for funeral benefits, or notify the Social Security Administration (SSA) or the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) of the death.

Many funeral service workers help clients who wish to plan their own funerals in advance to ensure that their needs are met and to ease the planning burden on surviving family members.

Funeral service workers also may provide information and resources, such as support groups, to help grieving friends and family.

#### ***Profile***

**Interests:** People, Things, Data

**Working Conditions:** Both Inside and Outside

**Physical Strength:** Medium Work

**Education Needs:** Associate Degree, Bachelor's Degree

**Licensure/Certification:** Varies By State

**Opportunities for Experience:** Internship, Apprenticeship

**Interest Score:** ECS

manage other details as well, such as helping the family decide whether the body should be buried, entombed, or cremated. This decision is critical because funeral practices vary among cultures and religions.

Most funeral service workers attend to the administrative aspects of a person's death, including submitting papers to state officials to receive a death certificate. They

## OCCUPATION SPECIALTIES

### **Mortician and Funeral Arranger**

Morticians and funeral arrangers (also known as funeral directors or, historically, undertakers) plan the details of a funeral. They often prepare obituaries and arrange for pallbearers and clergy services. If a burial is chosen, they schedule the opening and closing of a grave with a representative of the cemetery. If cremation is chosen, they coordinate the process with the crematory. They also prepare the sites of all services and provide transportation for the deceased and mourners. In addition, they arrange the shipment of bodies out of state or out of country for final disposition. Finally, these workers deal with administrative duties. For example, they often apply for the transfer of any pensions, insurance policies, or annuities on behalf of survivors.

Many morticians and funeral arrangers embalm bodies. Embalming is a cosmetic and temporary preservative process through which the body is prepared for a viewing by family and friends of the deceased.

## WORK ENVIRONMENT

### **Immediate Physical Environment**

Funeral service workers typically perform their duties in a funeral home. Workers also may operate a merchandise display room, crematory, or cemetery, which may be on the funeral home premises. The work is often stressful, because workers must arrange the various details of a funeral within 24 to 72 hours of a death. In addition, they may be responsible for managing multiple funerals on the same day.

Although workers may come into contact with bodies that have contagious diseases, the work is not dangerous if proper safety and health regulations are followed. Those working in crematories are exposed to high temperatures and must wear appropriate protective clothing.

### **Human Environment**

Funeral service workers deal directly with grieving families daily and must have the emotional fortitude and compassion to cope with that pressure routinely. Managers also direct funeral home staff and oversee maintenance of the funeral home.

### Technological Environment

Funeral home managers must be acquainted with standard business software such as accounting and payroll, as well as any A/V/ technology made available to clients during services and wakes. As they typically provide documentation services, they must also be familiar with the processes and platforms used to request a death certificate, resolve insurance claims, apply for funeral benefits, and notify the SSA or the VA of a death.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND ADVANCEMENT

### High School/Secondary

High school students can prepare to become a funeral service worker by taking classes in biology, chemistry, business, and public speaking. Students may gain relevant experience working part-time or summer jobs in a funeral home.

#### Suggested High School Subjects

- Accounting
- Algebra
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Civics
- Earth or life or Physical Science
- Economics
- English
- Entrepreneurship
- Geometry
- History
- Personal Finance
- Physics
- Pre-Calculus
- Public Speaking
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Statistics

### Transferable Skills and Abilities

#### Business Skills

- Processing financial statements and managing a funeral home efficiently and profitably

#### Compassion

- Treating clients with care and sympathy in their time of loss

#### Interpersonal Skills

- Explaining and discussing all matters about services provided, tactfully

#### Time-management Skills

- Handling numerous tasks for multiple customers, often over a short timeframe

#### Related Career Pathways/Majors

*Business, Management & Administration Career Cluster*

- General Management Pathway

*Health Science Career Cluster*

- Support Services Pathway

*Human Services Career Cluster*

- Consumer Services Pathway
- Family & Community Services Pathway
- Personal Care Services Pathway

**Postsecondary**

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An associate degree in a funeral service or mortuary science education program is typically required for all funeral service workers to enter the occupation. Courses usually cover topics such as ethics, grief counseling, funeral service, and business law. Accredited programs also include courses in embalming and restorative techniques.

The American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) accredits funeral service and mortuary science programs, most of which offer a 2-year associate degree at community colleges. Some programs offer a bachelor's degree.

Although an associate degree is typically required, some employers prefer applicants to have a bachelor's degree.

**Related College Majors**

- Funeral & Mortuary Science

**Adult Job Seekers**

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Funeral home managers typically have multiple years of experience working as a funeral director or mortician before becoming managers.

**Professional Certification and Licensure**

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Most states and Washington, DC, require workers to be licensed. An exception is Colorado, which offers a voluntary certification program. Although licensing laws and examinations vary by state, most applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be 21 years old
- Complete an ABFSE accredited funeral service or mortuary science education program
- Pass a state and/or national board exam
- Serve an internship lasting 1 to 3 years
- Working in multiple states requires multiple licenses. For specific requirements, contact each applicable state licensing board.

Most states require funeral directors to earn continuing education credits to keep their licenses.

The Cremation Association of North America (CANA), International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCF), and the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) offer crematory certification designations. Many states require certification for those who will perform cremations. For specific requirements, contact your state board or the relevant professional organizations.

### **Additional Requirements**

Those studying to be morticians and funeral arrangers must complete training, usually lasting 1 to 3 years, under the direction of a licensed funeral director or manager. The training, sometimes called an internship or an apprenticeship, may be completed before, during, or after graduating from a funeral service or mortuary science program and passing a national board exam.

## **EARNINGS AND ADVANCEMENT**

Earnings depend on the size and location of the funeral home, and the number of clients served. Median annual earnings of funeral home managers were \$76,350 in 2019. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$44,120, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$161,870.

Funeral service workers may receive paid vacations, holidays, and sick days; life and health insurance; and retirement benefits. These are usually paid by an employer if the business is not self-owned.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND OUTLOOK**

Funeral home managers held 28,600 jobs in 2019. Sixty-seven percent were self-employed. Employment is expected to decline through the year 2029, at a rate of 4 percent, as consumers increasingly prefer cremation, which costs less and requires fewer workers than traditional funeral arrangements.

Despite projected employment declines, about 4,300 openings for funeral service workers are projected each year, on average, over the decade. All those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as to retire.

Opportunities remain favorable for those who are licensed as both a funeral arranger and an embalmer, for those willing to relocate, and for certified crematory operators.

### **Related Occupations**

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- Administrative Services/Facilities Manager
- Advertising/Promotions/Marketing Manager
- Human Resources Manager
- Physician/Surgeon
- Psychologist
- Social Worker

## **MORE INFORMATION**

### **American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE)**

992 Mantua Pike, Suite 108  
Woodbury Heights, NJ 08097  
816.233.3747  
exdir@abfse.org  
www.abfse.org

### **Cremation Association of North America (CANA)**

499 Northgate Parkway  
Wheeling, IL 60090-2646  
312.245.1077  
info@cremationassociation.org  
www.cremationassociation.org

### **International Cemetery, Cremation & Funeral Association (ICCFA)**

107 Carpenter Drive, Suite 100  
Sterling, VA 20164  
800.645.7700  
iccfa.com

### **National Funeral Directors & Morticians Association (NFDMA)**

6290 Shannon Parkway  
Union City, GA 30291  
800.434.0958  
nfdma.com

**National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA)**

13625 Bishop's Drive

Brookfield, WI 53005

800.228.6332

nfda@nfda.org

nfda.org

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*Stuart Paterson*