

Alternatives to Burial

Pre-planning your funeral arrangements will ensure that your wishes are followed. Today, a typical funeral service that includes casket, earth burial, plot, headstone, and other services can cost around \$10,000. Many do not want to spend (or want their family to spend) this much money to dispose of their body. While traditional burial arrangements may be your preference, you owe it to yourself to be informed and consider all options. Alternatives to earth burial include cremation and donating your body to a medical school. Pre-planning will also mean that your spiritual and personal wishes are honored.

Donating Your Body to Medical Science

You can avoid the worry about burial expenses and arrangements altogether by giving your body to a medical school. This is a good option for anyone who wants to provide for the training of future doctors.

The University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville both have Body Bequeathal (Donation) Programs. These programs aid in the training of physicians, physician assistants, and other health workers.

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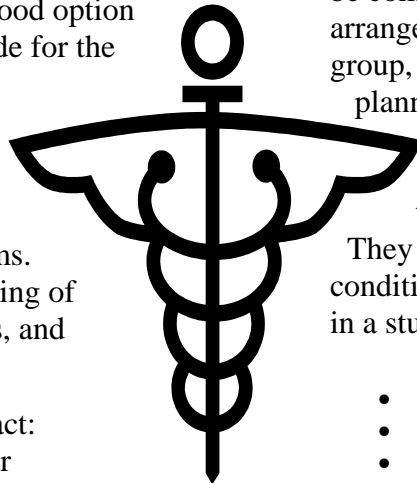
Requirements for body donations

If you plan to donate your body, first check with the medical school of your choice for details on transportation of your body, any forms that must be completed prior to death; and make your arrangements with a funeral home, religious group, or other organization if a memorial is planned. UK and U of L require the donor to be at least 18 years of age and of sound mind. They also have requirements on the condition of the body upon death.

They have the right to refuse a donation if the condition of the body prevents it from being used in a study. Examples include donors who:

- have had recent major surgery
- have infections or contagious diseases
- are extremely obese
- die of trauma
- have received a partial or complete autopsy
- have been organ donors (excluding corneas)
- have a family member who objects to the bequeathal of their body to the Program

In the event your body is not accepted for donation, it is in your best interest to have an alternative plan. A good place to begin your funeral planning is The Funeral Consumer's Alliance of Greater Louisville. This is a non-profit group run by volunteers who aid in planning funerals for reasonable prices through their contracts with two Louisville funeral homes. You may also want to contact a funeral



home director in your area to find out what they offer.

What happens to my body after donation?

There is no set time frame for a body to be used for study. Both the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville keep the bodies in their hospital until they are needed.

It is the policy of the University of Kentucky to have all remains cremated. The family of the deceased has the option to receive the ashes or have



the ashes buried in the University of Kentucky burial grounds located in Lexington Cemetery. The burial service is open to family members of the deceased, as well as students and faculty of the medical school. In addition, the University of Kentucky has a memorial service at the Chandler Medical Center to recognize those who donated their bodies. The interfaith service is open to faculty, students, and family members of the deceased.

The University of Louisville also has a policy to cremate the remains and bury them in the University of Louisville cemetery. U of L has a memorial service every two years in recognition of those who donated their bodies to the school.

Cremation

Cremation is increasingly popular as an alternative to traditional burial. According to the Cremation Association of North America, a national survey shows that 46% of Americans will choose to be cremated, rather than buried. Reasons given included saving money, saving land, and to have a simpler and less emotional process than burial.

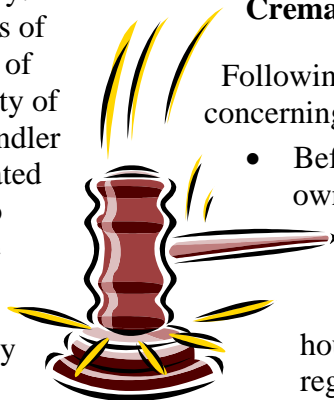
Cremation is the process of reducing the remains of the deceased to bone fragments using extreme heat. The bone fragments are then returned to the family either in a purchased urn or a container provided by the crematorium. The body must be in a container of some type to be cremated. This container need not be a traditional casket; some choose to be cremated in a simple wood or cardboard box that is rigid and leak-proof. Embalming is not required, although it may be appropriate in certain circumstances, such as if the body is to be transported across state lines.

If you decide on cremation, you may choose from a number of funeral homes in Kentucky that are associated with a crematorium. The funeral director can assist with arrangements for transportation and the memorial service and should be familiar with state laws regarding cremation.

Kentucky Laws on Crematoriums and Cremation Procedures

Following are some of Kentucky's laws concerning crematoriums:

- Before a crematorium may open, the owner must obtain a license through the Attorney General.
- The operator of the crematorium must have at least 48 hours of relevant training and be registered with the Attorney General.
- The crematorium must keep information on those who are cremated, including their name, date the body was received, date the cremation was performed, name of person authorizing cremation, and name of person performing cremation. This information must be kept on file for 10 years.
- Only one body may be cremated at a time.
- The body may not be removed from the cremation container once it is delivered to the crematorium.
- A body may not be cremated if it has hazardous implants such as a pacemaker, or any toxic or explosive-type sealed implants. The person authorizing the cremation must



notify the crematorium of such devices, and they must be removed before cremation.

- To avoid mixing of remains:
 - identifying information is placed on the container before cremation;
 - during cremation, this information is placed on the chamber; and
 - after cremation, the information is placed on the urn or temporary container.
- Once a body has been cremated,
 - the ashes are to be put in a specified container;
 - the cremation area is then thoroughly cleaned; and then
 - the ashes are delivered to the family, as requested.
- Once a body has been cremated and the ashes delivered to the family, the family may do with them what they please. This includes scattering them on private property with owner permission, scattering them in approved public places, or keeping them in the urn or container.

Currently, 15 crematoriums are registered in Kentucky. They are located in: Ashland (1), Murray (1), Owensboro (2), Lexington (1), Elizabethtown (1), Louisville (3), Paducah (1), Somerset (2), Bowling Green (2), and Versailles (1).

What Does My Religion Say About Body Bequeathal and Cremation?

If you are concerned that your religious beliefs may be compromised if you donate your body to medical science or have it cremated, you may want to speak with a spiritual leader in your community, someone who may offer insights and direction in your planning.

Can I Still Have a Memorial Service?

If you decide to donate your body to medical science or to be cremated, you may still want a memorial service. Most churches and funeral homes allow the urn to be placed in the front during the service, or you may have the service

prior to cremation or donation. It is a good idea to check with the church or funeral home regarding their policies. See our publication, "Planning a Memorial Service," for more ideas.

Resources and References:

Cremation Association of North America

<http://www.cremationassociation.org/>

Office of the Attorney General

State Capitol, Suite 118

Frankfort, KY 40601

(502) 696-5300

<http://www.law.state.ky.us/cp/36797501.htm>.

Consumer Statutes: Crematoriums

University of Kentucky

http://www.mc.uky.edu/neurobiology/bb_about.htm

University of Louisville

<http://www.louisville.edu/medschool/anatomy/1-bequeathal/bequeathal.html>

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Louisville

<http://www.funerals.org/Louisville/>

Funeral Consumers Alliance

www.funerals.org

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