	CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL		Effective Date September 1, 2015	
	Funeral Services for Children in Care		Section 3	Subsection 26

I. SUBJECT

Funeral services for when a child is in the care of the Office of Child and Family Services.

II. BACKGROUND

The untimely death of any young person is traumatic for all involved. When this happens to a child who is in the care and custody of the Department, there are many complex dynamics to consider. Providing support, care and consideration for all involved in this traumatic event is critical.

III. POLICY STATEMENT

When a child in foster care dies, the Department will follow its statutory obligation to ensure the child is provided with a decent burial. In carrying out this obligation, Department staff will, whenever possible, engage families, resource parents, and others in the community in planning funeral arrangements. Department staff will respectfully and empathetically engage birth families, resource families, and other children in those families during periods of grief and loss following the death of the child. Staff will be respectful and aware that individuals, both adults and children, grieve differently and one must honor the individual's manner of expressing grief and loss. Staff will be encouraged to support their peers who have been involved with that child and who may similarly be impacted with feelings of grief and loss.

IV. PRACTICE MODEL

Relationships and communication among staff, children, families, foster parents, and community providers are conducted with genuineness, empathy, and respect.

V. LEGAL BASE :


Title 22 M.R.S. §4065

VI. PROCEDURE STATEMENT

Notification of Death:

When a child in foster care dies, the social worker involved with the child or another staff must immediately inform the following:

- A. Any parent whose rights have not been terminated

	CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL		Effective Date September 1, 2015	
	Funeral Services for Children in Care		Section 3	Subsection 26

B. The guardian ad litem for the child;

C. An adult sibling of the deceased child and/or a minor sibling of the deceased child, at a time and in a manner approved by the Program Administrator.

D. Any person who is pursuing or in the process of adopting the child.

E. Any other Child Welfare Caseworker who has a child placed in the same home as the child who has died.

F. District Program Administrator (PA), Assistant Program Administrator (APA), or Caseworker Supervisor will review the case file to see which staff, relatives of the child and resource families that had significant involvement with this child during the child's involvement in the child welfare system, and will notify, as deemed appropriate, of the death of the child.

G. The attorneys of record for any parent whose rights have not been terminated or any other party of the child protective order pursuant to which the child came into the Department's custody, when attempts to notify the parent(s), guardian, or other party have failed.

H. Any parent whose rights have been terminated to the child who has died, if such notice has been approved by the Program Administrator.


I. Any other party to the child protection order pursuant to which the child came into the Department's custody.

Collaboration with Family:

During these events, one of the most vital, and difficult roles of the Child Welfare Caseworker is to facilitate discussions around what constitutes an *appropriate* obituary, celebration of life, funeral services and appropriate burial for the child (see Appendix A Guidelines for Writing of Obituary). The decisions around these necessary tasks should be made after information gathering has occurred with the birth family, resource family and in consultation with a supervisor, APA or PA. Questions around religious preferences and rituals should be clarified at this time. When it is not appropriate to involve the birth family or the resource family in this planning, the child Welfare Caseworker will seek supervision.

Arrangements for funeral:


The caseworker and supervisor will make the recommendation and the PA, who is responsible for authorizing payments related to funeral expenses. In this role, the supervisor will ensure, to

	CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL		Effective Date September 1, 2015	
	Funeral Services for Children in Care		Section 3	Subsection 26

the extent possible, that family and cultural aspects are taken into consideration in choice of basic items required for burial and service. Funeral homes typically offer many services which can be included with an additional expense. While the Department will cover the basic expenses, family members, other agencies or the community of the deceased child may choose to supplement the Department's contribution by privately funding additional items to personalize the service.

Supporting Birth, Resource Families, and Department staff through the Grief Process:

This policy recognizes and respects that the grief process may look different for each person who is impacted by the child's death. Some children and adults will be impacted by cumulative effects of past losses as they grieve the current loss and some may seem to be minimally impacted. Supporting the family wherever they are at in the process is important. During monthly contacts with siblings or with children who resided with the deceased child, it will be especially important for social workers to be attuned to manifestations of grief and to arrange for additional support for the child and resource family, if needed. Caseworkers will be impacted by the child's death and like others grieving the loss; will have differing ways in which they express this grief and loss. It will be important for staff and supervisors to support each other during these periods.

	CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES MANUAL	Effective Date September 1, 2015		
	Funeral Services for Children in Care	Section 3	Subsection 26	

A.

Guidelines for writing of Obituary

- For children whose parents' parental rights have been terminated, the obituary may state that the child as being survived by a large and caring family
- It may, without identifying the nature of relationships, include the names of birth family, resource family, and extended family members.
- The obituary notice may mention teachers or other community members who played a significant and supportive role in the child's life.