

# NFDA Calls Up More Volunteers to Care for Pandemic Victims

Brookfield, Wis. – The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) has called up more volunteers to lend on-the-ground assistance in some of the areas hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. As of April 21, 837 members of the funeral profession, from licensed funeral directors to students and apprentices, have expressed a willingness to help their colleagues in need and 492 have been called up to serve.

Most recently, the following volunteers have been called up:

- New York
  - On April 11, the names of 113 licensed funeral directors were sent to the New York State Funeral Directors Association (NYSFDA), which is managing requests for assistance from funeral homes in the New York City area.
  - The names of 112 students and apprentices were sent to the New York City Office of Emergency Management to help hospitals ensure decedents in their custody are treated respectfully until funeral homes conduct transfers.
- Michigan
  - On April 17, the names of 30 funeral directors were sent to the Michigan Funeral Directors Association (MFDA), which is working with the Community Health Emergency Coordination Center and the Michigan Emergency Operations Center. These volunteers will work to ensure decedents are safely and respectfully transferred from hospitals to temporary sheltering facilities.
- North Carolina
  - On April 16, the names of 76 students and apprentices were sent to the North Carolina Office of Emergency Management. These volunteers will work to ensure decedents are safely and respectfully transferred from hospitals to temporary sheltering facilities.

NFDA previously called up the following:

- New York
  - On April 8, the names of eight licensed funeral directors from the state of New York were provided to NYSFDA to assist funeral homes in New York City.
  - On April 9, the names of 115 students and apprentices were sent to the New York City Office of Emergency Management to help hospitals ensure decedents in their custody are treated respectfully until funeral homes conduct transfers.
- New Jersey
  - On April 10, the names of 23 volunteers – 16 licensed funeral directors from New Jersey and 7 students and apprentices – were forwarded to the New Jersey State Funeral Directors Association, which is managing requests for assistance from funeral homes.
- Michigan
  - On April 10, NFDA sent the names of 15 volunteers from the state of Michigan to MFDA, which is managing requests for help from funeral homes.

## Volunteer Process

“We are grateful that so many volunteers have stepped forward to help their colleagues in need,” said Senior Vice President of Member Relations Anna Bernfeld. “This speaks to the kindness and generosity of funeral professionals. Please know we are working as quickly as we can to deploy volunteers to areas in need. While we wish it were as easy as NFDA going in and setting up an operation on the ground, we have to respect the authority of state and local emergency management officials and the work of funeral homes in that city. We want to be good partners with them as they work to care for the dead and serve families.”

NFDA is in regular contact with state funeral directors' associations regarding their need for volunteers to help funeral homes in cities experiencing high rates of death due to the pandemic. Federal, state and local government agencies have also reached out to NFDA about needs they have for volunteers. NFDA is working in conjunction with these entities to place volunteers based on factors such as how well their experience matches specific needs and how far they are willing to travel.

Knowing that state associations and government agencies are very busy responding to the pandemic, NFDA always offers to manage the volunteer placement process from start to finish.

However, all entities that NFDA has worked with, thus far, have chosen to work directly with the volunteers to manage placements. Therefore, NFDA has been sending the names of volunteers to state associations and government agencies that have requested assistance.

There is sometimes a delay between when a volunteer is notified that their name has been shared and when the state association or government agency contacts them. Reasons could include: (1) the volunteer's name was shared with a funeral home, but the owner has been so busy that they have not yet been able to reach out; (2) the state association or government agency managing volunteers may still be working through that list of names and determining placements; or (3) the government agency is gathering names in anticipation of an actual need.

"We ask our volunteers to please be patient as we and our partners at state associations and government agencies work through this process of placing funeral professionals," said Bernfeld.

NFDA is grateful to the Funeral Service Foundation and its COVID-19 Crisis Response Fund, which is reimbursing expenses incurred during their service (e.g., transportation, lodging and meals) that are not covered by any other funder or agency

NFDA continues to add names to its roster of volunteers in anticipation of other needs emerging in the days and weeks to come. Funeral service professionals willing to volunteer can fill out a form on the NFDA website, <https://www.nfda.org/covid-19/help-needed>. The form asks potential volunteers to be as specific as possible with the kind of assistance and expertise they can offer. (Funeral service professionals who have already submitted their name do not need to provide their information again.) Questions about volunteering can be sent to [nfda@nfda.org](mailto:nfda@nfda.org).

For those who are unable to volunteer, they can support volunteer and other response efforts through a gift to the Funeral Service Foundation's COVID-19 Crisis Response Fund. The fund has two pillars of support: emergency assistance and grief support. Designed to be flexible, the fund will provide grants for immediate needs within funeral service including emergency response to significant loss of life; grants to organizations providing services and resources to families with unresolved and complicated grief due to loss during this crisis; and grants for other important needs as funeral service continues to serve families during this rapidly evolving crisis. For more information about the fund, to make a contribution or to apply for a grant, visit [www.funeralservicefoundation.org](http://www.funeralservicefoundation.org).

NFDA is the world's leading and largest funeral service association, serving more than 20,000 individual members who represent nearly 11,000 funeral homes in the United States and 49 countries around the world. NFDA is the trusted leader, beacon for ethics and the strongest advocate for the profession. NFDA is the association of choice because it offers funeral professionals comprehensive educational resources, tools to manage successful businesses, guidance to become pillars in their communities and the expertise to foster future generations of funeral professionals. NFDA is headquartered in Brookfield, Wis., and has an office in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit [www.nfda.org](http://www.nfda.org).