

FEMA offers COVID-19 Funeral Financial Assistance

Churches should know that FEMA is offering to assist “economically insecure” families who have incurred a heavy cost in funerals as a result of COVID-10. FEMA uses a standard process to determine “eligible Funeral Assistance award amounts across all COVID-19 declarations.” The agency will rely on “stakeholder groups” and “community partners,” including churches, for help in its outreach to potential applicants. The announcement states:

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought overwhelming grief to many families. At FEMA, our mission is to help people before, during and after disasters. We are dedicated to helping ease some of the financial stress and burden caused by the virus.

We are working with stakeholder groups to get their input on ways we can best provide this assistance, and to enlist their help with outreach to families and communities. FEMA will begin to implement COVID-19 funeral assistance in April.

FEMA says it will begin accepting applications in April. Additional guidance is being finalized and will be released to potential applicants and community partners as soon as possible. In the meantime, people who have COVID-19 funeral expenses are encouraged to keep and gather documentation.

We are working to set up a dedicated toll-free phone number that can be used to apply for funeral assistance. More information will be available soon.

An applicant may receive Funeral Assistance for actual funeral costs up to \$9,000 for each COVID-19 related funeral for which they are responsible, that occurred in FD 104-21-0001 4 the area covered by a COVID-19 disaster declaration including Individual Assistance.

This assistance may be provided for multiple decedents (deceased persons) under one registration up to the financial ONA (other needs assistance) maximum award for the fiscal year in which the disaster was declared. For the COVID-19 disasters, the financial ONA maximum award is \$35,500.

a. Any funds received by the applicant for Lost Wages Supplemental Payment Assistance (LWA) up to \$1,800, authorized by the President to supplement the payment of lost wages as a result of COVID-19, also count toward an applicant’s financial ONA maximum award.

b. When an applicant is eligible for more than \$33,700 (the maximum amount of ONA less the maximum amount of LWA) in Funeral Assistance, FEMA will coordinate with the state to determine the amount of LWA funds the applicant received and utilize that information in calculating the total eligible Funeral Assistance available to the applicant.

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Who is Eligible?

To be eligible for funeral assistance, you must meet these conditions:

- The death must have occurred in the United States, including the U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia.
- The death certificate must indicate the death was attributed to COVID-19.
- The applicant must be a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified alien who incurred funeral expenses after January 20, 2020.
- There is no requirement for the deceased person to have been a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified alien.

How to Apply

In April FEMA will begin accepting applications. If you had COVID-19 funeral expenses, we encourage you to keep and gather documentation. Types of information should include:

- An official death certificate that attributes the death directly or indirectly to COVID-19 and shows that the death occurred in the United States, including the U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia.
- Funeral expenses documents (receipts, funeral home contract, etc.) that includes the applicant's name, the deceased person's name, the amount of funeral expenses, and the dates the funeral expenses happened.
- Proof of funds received from other sources specifically for use toward funeral costs. We are not able to duplicate benefits received from burial or funeral insurance, financial assistance received from voluntary agencies, government agencies, or other sources.

How are Funds Received

If you are eligible for funeral assistance you will receive a check by mail, or funds by direct deposit, depending on which option you choose when you apply for assistance.

To learn more visit these websites:

- <https://www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus/economic/funeral-assistance>
- https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_policy_covid-19_funeral_assistance-updated.pdf