

VOLS

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A Guide to
Burial Assistance
for
New Yorkers in Need

*We are indebted to
Davis Polk & Wardwell
for printing copies of this Guide*

About VOLS

Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS) works to increase the availability of pro bono civil legal services to New York City's poor. We identify areas of legal need, develop programs to meet these needs, and recruit volunteer lawyers and law firms to provide the necessary legal services. Through our programs, VOLS provides the practical means by which volunteer lawyers are identified and matched with poor people.

About the VOLS Elderly Project

The VOLS Elderly Project provides free civil legal services to elderly poor persons living in Manhattan who otherwise would have great difficulty accessing legal information and assistance. Our legal services are provided at VOLS legal clinics at eleven senior centers; through social workers contacting VOLS staff to discuss legal problems that their clients are experiencing; at legal information seminars conducted by VOLS staff for seniors and senior center social work staff; and through direct referrals by VOLS of legal matters to volunteer lawyers.

For more information on the VOLS Elderly Project, contact Oscar S. Straus, III, Project Director: (212) 966-4400, fax (212) 219-8943, e-mail ostraus@volsprobono.org.

About the Guide

This Guide provides burial assistance information for friends and families of poor persons who have died, and for social workers who work with elderly poor New Yorkers to make burial arrangements.

Inclusion of agencies and funeral homes in the Guide does not imply endorsement of these entities by VOLS. We would be delighted to receive information on other agencies and funeral homes which assist poor persons for possible inclusion in future editions of the Guide..

Single copies of the Guide may be obtained by sending a stamped (\$1.52), self-addressed 9 x 12 envelope to Volunteers of Legal Service, 54 Greene Street, New York, New York 10013.

Acknowledgment

Our special thanks to Jack Kupferman, Esq., who undertook the research and writing of the Guide.

Jack has been working with the New York City Department of Aging for more than a decade. He is the founder and director of the Institute for Elder Resources. His childhood was spent living with seniors at the Adult Home his parents owned and operated. With more than 40 years experience working with seniors, his insight into what might be most helpful to families, friends and advocates at an extraordinarily difficult time has been invaluable.

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New York City
Human Resources Administration
Department of Social Services

Burial Claims Unit
151 Lawrence Street, Room 501
Brooklyn, New York 11217
718-488-5482

Benefits Provided:

- Monetary Assistance

Description of Services:

When a person dies and does not leave enough money for burial expenses, HRA will reimburse a portion of the burial expense (up to a maximum of \$800) for a funeral costing no more than \$1,400 for deceased residents of the City of New York.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Decedent must have been a resident of the City of New York
2. Friends or relatives of the deceased are not legally required or are unable to pay burial costs.
3. Decedent was eligible for NYS Medicaid benefits.
4. Funeral costs do not exceed \$1,400 in total.

How to Apply:

1. A notarized application to the Burial Claims Unit must be filed within 60 days of death. Submission of all necessary documentation must occur within 60 days of the date of initial application.
2. An application from a relative, friend or “organizational friend” may be accepted. Each type of application requires individualized verifying forms and documentation.
3. Documents Required:
 - a. Original Death Certificate.
 - b. Properly completed application form with supporting documentation.
 - c. Copy of cemetery or crematory bill, including all charges.
 - d. Two itemized funeral bills, signed by the Funeral Director and notarized.
 - e. If money is still owed to the Funeral Director, two notarized Funeral Director’s Affidavit forms must be submitted.
 - f. Copy of the “Statement of Goods and Services Selected” (the Arrangement Sheet). The sequential number from the Funeral Director must appear on this sheet.
 - g. Verification of income and assets.
4. In some instances, the fiduciary of the estate may be required to attend a personal interview.

Geographic Restriction:

New York City, 5 boroughs

Funding Source:

Government Agency

Associated Facilities:

None

Contact Person:

None

Helpful Hints:

There may be significant delays in receiving reimbursement. Occasionally, applications seeking reimbursement are denied.

Crime Victims Board Of New York State

55 Hanson Place
10th Floor
Brooklyn, New York 11206
8:45 AM – 5 PM M–F Brooklyn Office
718-923-4325
800-247-8035

Benefits Provided:

- Monetary Assistance
- Counseling

Description of Services:

If the decedent was murdered (or otherwise died as a victim of crime) and the family is determined by the Crime Victim Board to be indigent, the Crime Victims Board may contribute up to \$6,000 to offset individual and funeral expenses. \$500 may be provided initially. Additional funds may be authorized to the funeral home. In some infrequent instances, loss of wages may be considered. Applicants considered on a “case-by-case” basis.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Decedent was murdered or otherwise died as a crime victim in The City of New York.
2. Family or estate is indigent (if seeking more than the \$500 emergency assistance).

Geographic Restrictions:

State of New York residence of victim and applicant

How to Apply:

1. Relative or friend of decedent must apply IN PERSON at the Crime Victims office for immediate assistance. Hours 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM.
2. Formal application required.
3. Death affidavit also required.
4. Documents required:
 - a. 2 pieces of identification from the applicant and 2 for the decedent.
 - b. Itemized funeral invoice (must be in the name of the applicant).
 - c. Police precinct of the murder.
 - d. Complaint claim number.
 - e. Detective’s name and phone number.
 - f. Death Certificate.
 - g. Most recent Federal income tax return of the decedent (for additional funeral assistance).

Funding Source:

Government Agency

Associated Facilities:

None

Helpful Hints:

Specialists will discuss the process of assistance and reimbursement.

Public Administrator In Each Borough

Benefits Provided:

The Office of the Public Administrator administers estates of decedents where no person entitled to take or to share in the estate will accept the responsibility to act, or where the decedent leaves no will or a personal representative entitled by law to act.

Description of Services:

Among other things, the Public Administrator investigates the affairs of the decedent. The Public Administrator's Office **may authorize a funeral as well as the amount of money permitted for the funeral out of the estate of the decedent.** Additionally, the Public Administrator's office may search for relatives, pay debts of the estate and perform other duties. When a relative is located, the Public Administrator determines whether that individual is prepared to accept responsibility for the estate of the decedent.

Go to the court in the Borough where the decedent resided.

New York County	Surrogate's Court 31 Chambers Street, Room 311 New York, New York 10007 212-788-8430
Bronx County	851 Grand Concourse Bronx, New York 10451 718-293-7660
Kings County	360 Adams Street Brooklyn, New York 11201 718-522-4475
Queens County	88-11 Sutphin Boulevard Jamaica, New York 11435 718-526-5043
Richmond County	130 Stuyvesant Place, 4 th Floor Staten Island, New York 10301 718-876-8377

Safe Horizon

2090 Seventh Avenue
10th Floor
New York, New York 10027
212-316-2100

Benefits Provided:

- Liaison with NYS Crime Victims Board
- Monetary Assistance
- Counseling
- Written Pamphlets

Description of Services:

For the family of homicide victims, Safe Horizon provides an array of assistance, both emergency and ongoing, including advocacy for benefits, accompaniment to court appearances, emergency financial assistance, bereavement and therapeutic counseling, information and referral, funeral and burial assistance. Safe Horizon serves as liaison with and conduit for information to the New York State Crime Victims Board to expedite reimbursement for funeral and personal expenses of needy families.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Family member applicant must be a resident of New York State.
2. Homicide victim.
3. Income limitations for those seeking continuing financial assistance.

Geographic Restrictions:

New York State Residency

How to Apply:

1. Formal application required.
2. Contact 212-316-2100.
3. Verification of income of applicant required for financial assistance.
4. Similar crime and personal identification documents required as required by the NYS Crime Victims Board.
5. Listing of court appearances.

Funding Source:

Non-Profit Organization

Associated Facilities:

NYS Crime Victims Board

Contact Person:

Ms. Pierce

Veterans Administration

212-807-7229

Calverton National Cemetery

631-727-5410

Benefits Provided:

- Burial
- Monetary Assistance

Description of Services:

1. U.S. Veterans of the Armed Forces received an honorable discharge (DD 214) may be entitled to burial in a local National Cemetery at no cost.
2. If the death is service-connected, up to \$1,500 of burial costs may be reimbursed. If applicable, the VA will also pay the cost of transportation of the remains of the veteran to the nearest National Cemetery.
3. If (a) the veteran died in a VA medical or VA nursing facility or (b) the veteran had been receiving compensation from the VA, then \$300 in burialexpenses may be reimbursed and/or the decedent's estate may be eligible for \$1 50 "plot allowance."

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Decedent must have been a member of the Armed Forces and received an honorable discharge.
2. Responsible party requests burial in the National Cemetery System by contacting the Funeral Director.
3. Application for reimbursement must be made within 2 years of burial.

Geographic Restrictions:

None

How to Apply:

1. Contact Funeral Director for burial in National Cemetery System. If the veteran dies in NYC, the remains will most often be buried in the Calverton National Cemetery on Long Island.
2. Submit Honorable Discharge papers to Funeral Director.
3. For reimbursement, contact funeral director for assistance and contact Veteran's Administration directly. Submit application and verifying documentation to the Veteran's Administration.

Funding Source:

Government Agency

Associated Facilities:

Calverton National Cemetery
National Cemetery System
Veterans Hospital and Nursing Homes in the NYC Metropolitan Area

Contact Person:

Funeral Director

Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens

191 Joralemon Street
Brooklyn, New York 11201
718-722-6000

Benefits Provided:

- Plot
- Funeral
- Burial
- Pamphlets and Materials
- Emotional and Family Counseling
- Pastoral Counseling
- Referral to Undertaker

Description of Services:

1. The diocese assists needy individuals to provide a proper Catholic funeral and burial.
2. In addition to extensive pastoral and emotional counseling resources, the diocese maintains plots in Brooklyn, Queens and Rockville Centre for such purposes.
3. The diocese has contact with undertakers specializing in the Catholic tradition to provide low-cost or no-cost undertaking for needy families.
4. The diocese will provide referrals to other religious agencies as appropriate.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Must be Catholic to be buried in a Catholic cemetery (a non-Catholic married to a Catholic may be buried in a Catholic cemetery).
2. Demonstrated financial need.
3. At home interview with a clergyman from the diocese.
4. Applicant will be asked if they have a cemetery plot, but need financial or other assistance to open the plot.

Geographic Restrictions:

Brooklyn
Queens

How to Apply:

Call the diocese office. No formal application is required.

Funding Source:

Catholic Church
Funeral Parlors

Associated Facilities:

Established funeral parlors and undertakers in the diocese.
Catholic cemeteries in the diocese and in Rockville Centre.

Contact Person:

Msgr. Cribbin

The Hebrew Free Burial Association Chevra Agudath Achim Chesed Shel Emeth

224 West 35 Street, Room 300
New York, New York 10001
212-239-1662

Benefits Provided:

- Funeral
- Burial
- Plot

Description of Services:

1. When someone Jewish lacks the assets to pay for his or her own funeral and burial, the HFBA will take full responsibility for removing the body and making all funeral and burial arrangements in accordance with Jewish tradition and law. Prior synagogue affiliation is not necessary. A Rabbi will officiate at the funeral.
2. Burial must take place at Mount Richmond Cemetery, Staten Island.
3. The HFBA will provide assistance in seeking reimbursement from government agencies for burial of the indigent. The HFBA will provide a low-cost funeral and burial for those eligible.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. The decedent must be Jewish.
2. Neither the decedent's estate nor the family have the funds needed for burial.
3. Funeral and burial in accordance with Jewish law and tradition is required.
4. Decedent may not have more than \$800 in his or her estate and must be eligible for Burial Claim assistance from the NYC Human Resources Administration.
5. The decedent must have been a resident of the State of New York.

Geographic Restrictions:

New York State

How to Apply:

1. Phone call to Hebrew Free Burial Association office, at any time of day.
2. Submission of required income and estate documentation.
3. Referral from Social Service agency or long term care facility.

Funding Source:

Non-Profit Agency

Associated Facilities:

Mount Richmond Cemetery on Staten Island

Contact Person:

Amy Koplow, Director

National Philoptochos Society

Greek Orthodox
345 East 74th Street
New York, New York 10021
212-744-4390
212-861-1956 (fax)

Benefits Provided:

- Monetary Assistance
- Social Services
- Crisis Intervention

Description of Services:

1. Provides emergency social service assistance to members of the Greek Orthodox community in the City of New York and throughout the country.
2. Limited reimbursement for funeral and burial expenses, lifetime maximum for a family.
3. Referral to funeral homes sensitive to Greek Orthodox concerns.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Must be Greek Orthodox or of Greek Orthodox heritage.
2. Decedent and family must experience financial hardship.
3. All other avenues for assistance have been exhausted.

Geographic Restrictions:

Referrals usually come from Greek Orthodox churches and clergy.
No specific geographic restrictions.

How to Apply:

1. Call Social Service Department of the National Philoptochos Society.
2. Verification of income and expenses.

Funding Source:

Non-Profit Organization affiliated with the Greek Orthodox Church.

Associated Facilities:

Funeral Parlors sensitive to the customs and needs of the Greek Orthodox tradition.

Contact Person:

Social Service Department.

Helpful Hints:

The Society seeks to be flexible in meeting the needs of its constituents.

Plaza Jewish Community Chapel

630 Amsterdam Avenue
at 92nd Street
New York, New York 10024
212-769-4400

Benefits Provided:

- Funeral
- Burial

Description of Services:

Plaza Jewish Community Chapel is a full service funeral home specifically for the Jewish community. Organized as a not-for-profit (501(c)(3) status alternative to other funeral homes, Plaza is locally run and operated serving any individual seeking a traditional Jewish burial. For decedents and families demonstrating indigence and where burial by the Hebrew Free Burial Association is not an option, Plaza will consider a request from a family or rabbi for assistance. If the decedent has a fully paid cemetery plot in the NYC metropolitan area, Plaza must be informed at the time the initial inquiry is made.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Decedent must be Jewish.
2. Funeral and burial in the Jewish tradition.

Geographic Restrictions:

Decedent must have lived in NYC Metropolitan area.

How to Apply:

1. Referral may be made by a Rabbi, social service agency or family member. A referral letter detailing the need is requested.
2. Indication of indigent status.

Associated Facilities:

None

Contact Person:

Andrew Fier, Executive Director

Helpful Hints:

The primary difference between the Hebrew Free Burial Association and Plaza Jewish Community Chapel is that the Plaza Chapel will bury the Jewish decedent at a cemetery other than Mount Richmond Cemetery in Staten Island.

Religious Affiliations (Generally)

Benefits Provided:

- Funeral
- Burial

Description of Services:

In rare instances, a monetary collection from religious organizations has been used to pay for funeral and burial expenses. Generally, the decedent had been a popular and active member of a particular religious group. The religious leader or an individual member may negotiate with the funeral parlor and/or cemetery for discounted rates.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Active religious participation of the decedent.
2. Religious leader or member spearheads the drive to collect funds from members and to negotiate with funeral home and cemetery.
3. Finding a cooperative funeral home.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul
For the Archdiocese of New York
(New York, Bronx, Staten Island)
1011 First Avenue
New York, New York 10022
212-755-8615

Benefits Provided:

- Call for information and referral 212-755-8615
- Referral to Low Cost Funerals
- Plot
- Bereavement Counseling 212-371-1000, ext. 3187
Family Life Respect Life Office of the Archdiocese of New York

Description of Services:

1. The St. Vincent de Paul Society, on behalf of the Archdiocese of New York, provides referral services for indigent families in need of assistance, including referral to low cost funerals.
2. Separately, the Archdiocese itself provides bereavement counseling. Additionally, the individual parishes can also contact the St. Vincent de Paul Society on behalf of the bereaved family.
3. The Society will provide assistance in receiving reimbursement from the HRA Burial Claim Unit.
4. In extraordinary instances, the Archdiocese will provide a “non-title” plot in Calvary Cemetery, Section 1 West (no headstone permitted).

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Individual should be Catholic.
2. Must be in financial need.
3. Family must provide: Medicaid number, cause of death, sources of income, Social Security number of the deceased, death certificate.

Geographic Restrictions:

Manhattan, Bronx, Staten Island

How to Apply:

For referral sources and general information, call the St. Vincent de Paul Society.
For bereavement counseling, contact the Family Life Office of the Archdiocese.

Funding Source:

Non-Profit Organizations associated with the Catholic Church
Funeral Homes, Parishes

Associated Facilities:

Established funeral homes and undertakers in the Archdiocese.
Calvary Cemetery.

Contact Person:

Vincent Reilly, St. Vincent de Paul Society 212-755-8615
Msgr. John Bonnici, Family Life Respect Life Office 212-371-1000, ext. 3187

Helpful Hints:

Contact individual parish and clergy to ask for assistance. The St. Vincent de Paul Society may be the clearest source of information and direction.

Actor's Fund of America

1501 Broadway, Suite 518
New York, New York 10036
212-221-7300 (ask for Intake)
800-221-7303 (outside NYC)

Benefits Provided:

- Plot
- Monetary Assistance

Description of Services:

1. The Actor's Fund maintains two cemetery plot areas. Each request will be considered on an individual basis and will be evaluated by special committee.
2. The Fund may provide a maximum of \$3,500 for funeral expenses before burial, a cemetery plot and grave marker.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Decedent
 - a. Must have worked in the entertainment industry for a minimum of five years and have acquired earnings of at least \$5,000/year in the last three years, or
 - b. Must have worked in the entertainment industry for a minimum of 20 years and earned \$2,000/year for any 10 of the 20 years.
 - c. Examples of individuals potentially eligible for benefits are: actors, singers, musicians, ticket sellers, make-up artists, stagehands, and clowns.
1. Decedent's estate does not have the funds needed for burial
2. Provide documentation of employment in the industry, including but not limited to union membership, W-2s, 1099s, playbills, reviews.
3. Eligibility criteria are flexible based on the circumstances.

Geographic Restrictions:

None

How to Apply:

1. Family members must notify, in writing or by phone, the Social Service department of the Actor's Fund.
2. If an Actor's Fund plot is desired, a separate request to the Intake Unit must be made.
3. Request must be made promptly after death of the indigent individual.

Funder:

Non-Profit Social Service Agency
Actor's Fund of America

Associated Facilities:

Cemetery
Kenisco Cemetery – Valhalla, New York

Contact Person:

Tamara Shapiro

**Children of Hope
Infant Burial Foundation
Nassau County Police Department**

1490 Franklin Avenue
Mineola, New York 11501
877-796-HOPE
516-781-3511

Benefits Provided:

- Funeral
- Burial

Description of Services:

To arrange for the dignified burials of abandoned and unclaimed deceased infants and children alone or in conjunction with the appropriate governmental agencies or other charitable organizations. Services are applicable to Nassau County as well as in New York City, Westchester and Rockland. The foundation gives these babies a first name, the last name being "Hope." Their resting place and grave markers show that they are part of a family that is cared for by loved ones.

Eligibility Requirements:

Child or infant dies without having been claimed.

How to Apply:

The Nassau County Police Department, Ambulance Medical Technicians, through the Children of Hope Foundation, learn of the tragedy and take appropriate steps to assure a dignified burial.

Geographic Restrictions:

New York City
Westchester
Rockland
Nassau County

Funding Source:

Foundation

Associated Facilities:

Non-Profit Organizations
Police Department
Emergency Medical Technicians

Contact Person:

877-796-HOPE
Tim Jaccard

St. George's Society of New York
175 9th Avenue
New York, New York 10011
212-924-1434

Benefits Provided:

- Cremation
- Burial, no ceremony
- Plot

Description of Services:

Serving exclusively persons born in Great Britain or the British Commonwealth, the Society provides cremation and internment as a last resort for those in financial need. Generally, this service is provided to individuals already receiving stipends from the St. George's Society, however, those individuals "in need" and meeting eligibility requirements may request assistance. No religious affiliation is required.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Must have been born in the United Kingdom or in a country of the British Commonwealth.
2. Must have been living in the New York City metropolitan area.
3. Must have died in the New York City metropolitan area.
4. Must have had insufficient income to meet basic expenses, including rent, utilities and food.
5. The Society will only provide funds for cremation.
6. Burial only at plots owned by the Society.

Geographic Restrictions:

Residence and death in the New York City metropolitan area.

How to Apply:

1. Contact Executive Director of St. George's Society.
2. Submit copy of birth certificate verifying original citizenship from the British Commonwealth.
3. Submit death certificate.
4. Notify the Society where the body is located.

Funding Source:

Foundation

Contact Person:

John Shannon

Associated Facilities:

Cemeteries: Cypress Hills
Kensico Cemetery, Valhalla, New York
Linden, New Jersey for veterans of the British Armed Forces

Atlantic Ocean Dissemination Services

Taglia, Lysak & Company

516-599-0041

800-526-5761

Benefits Provided:

- Burial at Sea

Description of Services:

Captain Kenneth Lysak, Jr. will perform a burial at sea for cremated remains. For ashes scattered at sea with no mourners present and in accordance with government regulation (3.3 nautical miles from shore), Captain Lysak will conduct the scattering and provide a “Certificate of Dissemination” for \$125. Captain Lysak will take up to six mourners 3.3 nautical miles from shore for \$350 on his boat. His vessel is moored in Oceanside, New York. For more than six mourners, costs increase significantly as a different vessel must be chartered. These costs are for cremated remains only.

Eligibility Requirements:

N/A

Geographic Restrictions:

None

Funding Source:

N/A

Associated Facilities:

None

Contact Person:

Captain Kenneth Lysak, Jr.

Funeral Homes

Funeral homes are licensed and regulated by the State of New York. For information concerning public affairs call Department of Health (518-474-7354)

Benefits Provided:

- Funeral
- Burial

Description of Services:

While funeral homes are business entities, it is not uncommon for funeral home directors to assist truly needy individuals and families when costs cannot be fully paid. Of course, funerals of this type will be basic. Every funeral director has encountered situations that tug at the heartstrings and many respond by reducing charges.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Impoverished decedent and family.
2. Referral from trusted source, such as clergy, long term care facility administrator or social service agency personnel.

How to Apply:

Contact and negotiate with the funeral home in instances of extreme need.

Neptune Society
601 Yonkers Avenue
Yonkers, New York 10704

800-645-3722

516-378-5990

www.neptunesociety.com

Benefits Provided:

Cremation & Burial at Sea

Description of Services:

Neptune Society arranges for cremation and if requested, burial at sea. Provides a simple and dignified cremation, but is not necessarily the least expensive cremation service. Is considered a funeral home, but does not have a building in which services (such as a wake or reception) may be held. Two offices – Yonkers, NY and Medford, Long Island. Approximately \$1,480 per cremation and burial at sea. Society employees deal directly with family members so that they understand the specialized type of services the Neptune Society provides. Neptune Society does not accept responsibility for filing NYC HRA Burial Claims Unit applications.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Family members must become a member of the Neptune Society. An application for membership may be obtained from the website or by fax.
2. Neptune Society requires phone contact with family members.
3. Charges must be paid directly to Neptune Society. If applicable, family must seek reimbursement without assistance of Neptune Society.

Geographic Restrictions:

None

How to Apply:

1. Complete membership application with Neptune Society.
2. Speak with Neptune Society staff.
3. Arrange payment terms.
4. Discuss specific requests and limitations.

Helpful Hints:

Neptune Society is a “for-profit” funeral home without walls, specializing in cremation and burial.

Notes

Notes