



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

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MDHHS Issues Emergency Order Related to Handling of Bodies

LANSING, MICH. Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Director Robert Gordon today issued an [Emergency Order](#) that shortens the time frame hospitals and funeral directors have to contact individuals with authority over disposition of the body of a deceased individual and the amount of time that individual has to make a decision regarding arrangements for the deceased.

Per MCL 333.2253, it has been determined COVID-19 has reached epidemic status in Michigan. As of Sunday, May 3, there were 43,754 cases of COVID-19 diagnosed in Michigan, with 4,049 deaths.

“The increase in deaths has placed a significant burden on the hospitals and funeral homes in our state,” said Gordon. “We need to alleviate this burden and ensure the safe, proper and respectful handling of Michiganders’ remains.”

The order provides hospitals and funeral directors 24 hours to attempt to contact persons with authority over disposition of the body of a deceased individual, including family members. If no such person can be located within that time, the duty falls to a county medical examiner.

If a person with authority over the disposition of a body is identified, they have 48 hours from the time of death to make a decision and complete arrangements regarding disposition. Failure to act within 48 hours of notification forfeits the right to make that decision.

The order also relaxes certain licensing provisions for funeral directors, allows funeral directors and medical examiners to authorize embalming, and allows for storage of bodies at a temporary storage facility provided by the Michigan Mortuary Response Team or at an alternate site procured by the license holder.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and CDC.gov/Coronavirus.

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