



COLUMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AGENDA ITEM REQUEST FORM

The Board of County Commissioners meets the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month in the Columbia County School Board Administrative Complex Auditorium, 372 West Duval Street, Lake City, Florida 32055. The first meeting of every month is at 9:30AM while the second meeting of every month takes place at 5:30PM. All agenda items are due in the Board's office one week prior to the meeting date.

Today's Date: 12/5/2024 Meeting Date: 12/12/2024

Department: BCC Administration

1. Nature and purpose of agenda item:

The County Commissioners increased the authorized payments for transportation and disposition/cremation of bodies at the November 21, 2024 Board Meeting. This item updates the policy to reflect the new authorized payments

2. Recommended Motion/Action:

Approve revised POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR DISPOSITION OF UNCLAIMED OR INDIGENT BODIES

3. Fiscal impact on current budget.

This item has no effect on the current budget.

**COLUMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR DISPOSITION
OF UNCLAIMED OR INDIGENT BODIES**

PURPOSE:

The purposes of these policies and procedures is to provide for the disposition of any unclaimed or indigent dead body in Columbia County, Florida and for payment of the expenses incurred by the County for the disposition of the deceased, all pursuant to chapter 406, Florida Statutes.

POLICY:

Any deceased person whose identity is known and whose body is unclaimed, who is known to be indigent, or whose identity is unknown, whether a resident or non-resident of the County, shall be eligible for County cremation or burial if the death occurred within Columbia County, Florida. Columbia County residents who die outside of Columbia County shall not be eligible for County cremation or burial under this policy and may be cremated or buried following procedures set forth in the county where the death occurred.

Disposition of unclaimed and indigent bodies shall be made at County expense under any one of the following conditions:

- The deceased person is unidentified or cannot be identified and the body is unclaimed;
- The deceased person, whether identity is known or unknown, is found to be indigent and is required to be disposed of at public expense (see attached income guidelines);
- The deceased person, whether identity is known or unknown, has no relatives, friends or responsible parties who come forward to claim the deceased person's body; or
- The deceased person, whether identity is known or unknown, has no non-indigent relatives, friends or responsible parties who come forward to claim the deceased person's body.

Determination of indigency shall be the responsibility of the Funeral Director utilizing the Disposition of Unclaimed and Indigent Bodies Application form and the Indigent Burial Next of Kin Statement form attached hereto and made a part of this policy.

Prior to the County certifying eligibility of the deceased for County cremation or burial, the Funeral Director shall attempt to recover expense from funding sources applicable to the deceased person. Examples of such sources include but are not limited to Social Security benefits, nursing home reimbursement, estate assets, life insurance, and veterans' service benefits.

As provided by Florida Statutes section 406.51, all Funeral Directors subject to this policy shall comply with the requirements of Florida Statutes section 406.50(2) and follow the procedures set forth in 38 C.F.R. s. 38.620 with respect to any known or suspected deceased veteran of the Armed Forces. If the deceased person is entitled to burial in a national cemetery, then the Armed Forces shall be notified to make arrangements for burial services. The Funeral Director shall be responsible for contacting the Armed Forces to ensure arrangements for burial in a national cemetery are made for any eligible deceased veteran.

Columbia County shall not provide for shipment of the deceased to or from any location outside Columbia County, Florida, for burial or cremation.

The Funeral Director shall not proceed with disposition of human remains without written authorization from the County.

A certified copy of the death certificate, a copy of the Disposition of Unclaimed and Indigent Bodies Application form, and Indigent Burial Next of Kin Statement must accompany any request for payment from the County to any funeral establishment for cremation or burial services.

Funeral establishments that participate in the Funeral Home Rotation Roster as approved by the Columbia County Board of County Commissioners and administered by the Columbia County Sheriff's Office shall adhere to this policy as a condition of continued participation in the rotation program.

The maximum authorized payment to funeral homes and/or crematories pursuant to this policy is ~~\$500.00~~ 600.00.

As provided by an Interlocal Agreement between the Columbia County Board of County Commissioners and the Lake Shore Hospital Authority dated the 3rd day of January 2008, each party to that agreement shall pay the costs and provide funding in accordance with that agreement.

UNCLAIMED DEAD BODIES/REMAINS DISPOSITION:

In accordance with Florida Statutes section 406.50, the State Anatomical Board located at the University of Florida Health Science Center, must be immediately notified each time any public officials, agents, or employees of Columbia County and every person in charge of any prison, morgue, hospital, funeral parlor, or mortuary and all other persons coming into possession, charge, or control of any dead human body or remains which are unclaimed or which are required to be cremated at public expense.

Notification of the anatomical board is NOT required if:

- 1) Death was caused by crushing injury,
- 2) The deceased had a contagious disease at the time of death,

- 3) An autopsy was required to determine cause of death,
- 4) The body is in a severe state of decomposition,
- 5) A relative, by blood or marriage, claims the body for burial at the expense of the relative, or
- 6) Any friend, or any representative of a fraternal society of which the deceased was a member, or a representative of any charitable or religious organization, or a governmental agency which was providing residential care to the indigent person at the time of his or her death, claims the body for burial at the expense of the claiming party.

Unless notification of the Anatomical Board is not required, then such dead human bodies shall be delivered to the Anatomical Board as soon as possible after death.

The County Manager or his designee shall be the person in charge or control of the remains as provided in Florida Statutes section 406.50(2), and a licensed funeral director under chapter 497, Florida Statutes, shall assume responsibility for the unclaimed remains from the County Manager or his designee as provided by section 406.50(3). The funeral director shall not be liable for any damages resulting from the cremation of a dead body at the direction of the County Manager or his designee or in furtherance of the funeral director's duties under this policy.

The person or entity in charge or control of the dead body or human remains shall make a reasonable effort to determine whether or not the deceased person is entitled to burial in a national cemetery as a veteran of the Armed Forces and, if so, shall make arrangements for such services in accordance with the provisions of 38 C.F.R. For purposes of this subsection "a reasonable effort" includes contacting the Columbia County Veterans Service Officer or regional office of the United State Department of Veterans Affairs.

PROCEDURE:

If an individual initiates a request for disposition services with the County rather than with a funeral establishment, that individual shall be advised by the County to contact the funeral establishment which originally transported the deceased to the Medical Examiner's office on rotation. If the deceased was not transported to the Medical Examiner's office and the individual indicates no preference of a funeral establishment for disposition, the County shall then provide a referral to a funeral establishment participating under this policy.

After exhausting all possibilities for private compensation, the Funeral Director shall complete the Indigent Burial Application and the Indigent Burial Next of Kin Statement (attached hereto) certifying that the deceased lacks the adequate income, assets, and/or support from family and friends, and other service agencies as may be appropriate in determining the financial status of the deceased. The Funeral Director shall apply the poverty threshold of 100% of the Poverty Income Guidelines as established and published annually in the Federal Register. If the available assets of the deceased are sufficient to cover the costs or portion of the costs of disposition, the assets will also be considered in determining eligibility and for payment to the funeral establishment. If the deceased is eligible for death benefits, such as Social Security, Railroad

Retirement, Union Death Benefits, Victim Services, or Veteran Death Benefits, the County will either pay the balance after the death benefits have been applied up to the maximum authorized payment amount or seek reimbursement up to the maximum amount of the maximum authorized payment amount of ~~\$500.00~~ 600.00. The County will not accept a case if death benefits from insurance or other funds are equal to or exceed the County maximum payment for indigent disposition (~~\$500.00~~ 600.00).

The County Manager or designee shall review the request for indigence or unclaimed status approval and authorize payment to the requesting funeral establishment in the maximum authorized payment amount from the County.

Upon approval by the County Manager, the funeral establishment shall notify the State Anatomical Board, if the deceased meets the criteria set forth in section 406.50, Florida Statutes. If the remains are accepted by the State Anatomical Board, the funeral home shall proceed according to subsection 406.50(2), Florida Statutes. The University of Florida Health Science Anatomical Board shall be responsible for the cost of preparation and transportation of the body to the Center. If the body is not accepted, the funeral establishment shall proceed with the cremation of the deceased.

The funeral establishment shall submit an itemized invoice for payment to the Columbia County Board of County Commissioners Office, along with documentation that contact was made with the State Anatomical Board.

To avoid overnight or prolonged storage of remains at the Medical Examiner's office, before the funeral establishment transports any remains to the Medical Examiner's office the funeral establishment shall contact the Medical Examiner's office to determine whether the remains can be processed by the Medical Examiner's office on the same day as the transport. If the Medical Examiner indicates that the remains can be returned to the funeral establishment on the same day, then the funeral establishment shall wait at the Medical Examiner's office until the remains are released back to the funeral establishment so overnight storage of remains at the Medical Examiner's office will not be necessary.

The County shall make payment in the amount indicated under Policy Guidelines upon receipt of invoice.

Placement of the remains is the Funeral Director's Responsibility.