

Funeral Director's Role

Funeral Directors (usually a great resource to help you care for your child after death) offer many services. If you want to have your baby brought home, either they may transport the baby to your home for awhile, or you may be able to drive your baby yourself (most states allow this...with the proper paper work.) You can make arrangements to bring your baby back to the funeral home when you are done or have your child picked up by the Funeral Director.

In some cases, you may find a Funeral Director who may not feel comfortable with a baby at home with his/her parents after death. If that becomes a problem for you, call another or ask a relative to help you research your community to find someone who can assist you...and meet your needs. Most will invite you to have a special dressing, rocking, private time with your baby prior to the service. This could be another option for you if you prefer not to have your baby at home.

More families are choosing to care for their loved ones themselves. It is possible that you can plan and organize the care and memorialization for your baby on your own. The book and website [Final Rights.org](http://www.FinalRights.org) describe how to do this in very practical terms. They also have a thorough listing of laws and parents' rights state by state. Another very helpful resource for support at this time is www.BringYourBabyHome.com

Since this movement is new to our generation, some hospitals and others may not be supportive of, or know how to help you (maybe due to perceived legal issues.) Do your best within the hospital and funeral home setting...if need be. Try to be flexible in case this is not an option for you. We can not guarantee how they will respond.

"My Grandmother talked about her baby sister being still-born when Gram was 6. She remembered holding her sister and being with her in the parlor over a few days. Her mom bathed, dressed, and rocked Hulda Mae. Then the kids helped dig her grave. I thought, 'What a natural way to handle the realities of the death of a loved one.' We have a lot to RE-learn." Sherokee Ilse, author of [Empty Arms](http://www.EmptyArms.com)

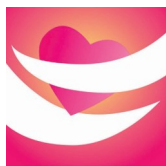
Why?

Maybe the real question is, 'Why not?' Why not fill your empty arms with your child in a place where there is no fear of someone interrupting, judging, or taking notes about you? If you want to spend time in your baby's room, or choose a different blanket or outfit, you can. If you have other children and they want to draw a picture for and/or sing to their sister or brother in their favorite chair, they can do it. Maybe a family member will sit with your baby while you rest or nap. Why not consider this idea rather than spend the only time you have with your child in the hospital or at the funeral home? *Do remember it is a choice and don't feel pressure to do this.* Just know that unless there are unusual circumstances, you usually can have your baby at home for a short time.

I have never heard of doing this before? It wasn't too many generations ago that this was the norm in the United States. All loved ones died and were cared for in their homes. The children touched their siblings, moms slept with the baby, she bathed and dressed her child, and the viewing took place over many hours in the home's parlor...Death indeed, had a place in the home.

What will others say? If you make decisions based on what others say, you will not satisfy your own heart and your family's needs.

Is this common practice anywhere else? In New Zealand, Holland, and developing countries, most babies and loved ones go home with the family for awhile. Many Indigenous cultures in the US and around the world, including the Amish, practice this type of care for their loved ones after death.

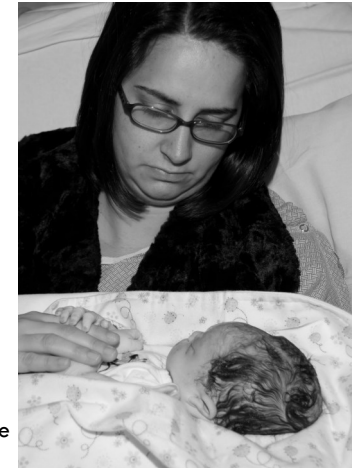


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Bringing Baby Home

*After
Miscarriage
Stillbirth
or
Infant death*



Carrie and baby Claire

"Having Olivia home with us after her death was the most important thing we did for ourselves, our sons, and our family!" Paul and Eileen (Minneapolis)

When a child dies in miscarriage, stillbirth, or early infant death, it is beyond tragic! There is so little time with the baby. Do you know you might be able to have your precious child at home for some private time and a meaningful goodbye?

If it is not too late, you may have the opportunity to create memories of holding, cuddling, singing, talking to, or rocking your baby in the privacy of your home. There are steps you can take to spend some sacred time with your baby. A Baby Loss Doula™ can help you do this; they know how. For a list of them—go to www.LossDoulas.com

Read this brochure and investigate the resources to learn more about 'why' this *could* be a good idea and 'how' to do it, as you consider your options and thoughtfully make your *own* decisions.

"When it was time to go back to our house in Montana, we stopped and picked up our baby boy...he was so perfect. We put him in his casket in our back seat with his grandmother, and drove the two hours back home. I will never forget the sight of my husband, carrying his little man into our house. We decided to place him in his crib in the nursery.." Larissa and Jim

How Do We Begin?

If you know your baby will be born still or will die soon, you have time to explore options. Even after the birth, you have time to investigate and make choices; do not rush.

- Talk with hospital staff about how/when you can take your baby home (even if miscarried). This may be easy, or there may be policies that complicate this option. If hospitals honor other cultures or religions who take their placenta and/or their baby out of the hospital, they may be discriminating against you if they don't let you. If possible, learn their policies before you sign any admission papers where you may unintentionally sign the 'tissue' or baby over to them. If you have signed the Consent form and want to rescind, ask to sign new papers (now that you are more informed.) There may be other papers to sign at the hospital or Vital Records that allow you to take the baby home. Then you may have private family time, a memorial service, and even drive your baby to the cemetery or a Funeral Home.

- If you want a Funeral Director, or are told you must contact one, call around (or get others to help you) to find someone who will help you do what you wish; this may take a few calls.

- Learn how long your baby can be held out of refrigeration, which helps slow decay. You may need to find a suitable container and use ice, instant cold packs, or well wrapped dry ice to put under your baby. Be sure your baby has a few blankets and/or plastic, newspaper, or paper bags between her or him and the ice to keep from harming baby's skin.

- Paperwork for transportation and cemetery burial may or may not be required.

- Think about what will be important to you when you have your baby home with you and your family, then make your meaningful plans. You could read favorite books to your baby, sit in your baby's room with lights low and tell family stories. Share your love and dreams. Sing lullabies. Look over your baby from head to toe and take tons of pictures—clothed-unclothed, held by family and even in the bassinet and crib. This is your time to do such things (parenting your child in this way is very normal and a healthy way to say goodbye.)

What Else?

- Memories and rituals are a key to healing over time. The time you spend with your baby after birth or after death will always be important and precious. Do everything you can to 'experience your baby fully.' Make the most of this time; you will not get a 'do over'.
- You may wish to bring or find special clothing to dress your baby in. www.MaryMadelineProject.org sends donated burial gowns made from bridal and prom dresses. Often hospitals have pretty gowns that have been donated.
- There are carrying cots and cradles and tips to keep your baby cool. Ask a Funeral Director about this.
- Ask to see the laws so you know how much time you have with your baby. Time may be limited.
- Rarely are babies embalmed; it is not usually required if you keep your baby cool. Miscarried babies should not even require Funeral Director involvement (since, sadly, state laws view this as tissue, not a baby).
- Even if your baby had an autopsy, you should be able to have him or her at home with you. Tell staff to let the pathologist know so he stitches up the wounds well. Then use a onesie to cover up your baby's body prior to dressing. Babies may be brought home even after a SIDS autopsy. This time may help ease *some* of the traumatic memories of the 'death scene.'
- Do you want privacy or visitors during your time with your baby? Ask someone to spread the word that you will invite them when and if you are ready...so they don't just stop in. OR you may suggest that people stop in between 1—3 so they have a time and you know there is an end.
- Parents deserve appropriate and well-researched, ongoing support resources. Parents who bring their baby home should be offered a connection to other bereaved parents and support groups as soon as possible.

A funeral director helped a couple in the Midwest have an 'open house' instead of a funeral. Over 1,000 people stopped in and signed the guest book. The family members rocked their baby in their arms the entire afternoon. It was a precious and beautiful thing.

For Family & Friends

You may not know anyone who has had their child, or loved one, in their home after death before. But it's likely that your great grandparents would have. Some have admitted they felt squeamish, confused, or upset about this idea.

After reviewing this brochure, you will see that many people around the world, including your country, have done this for centuries. We may have forgotten how and why, however. Much like the Hospice movement, where dying has been brought home, so it is with the idea of encouraging personal care of babies and other loved ones at home after death.

Some things you might want to know.

- In 41 states, this practice is legal and more frequent, as people realize they have this option and understand it is their right.
- You do not have to look at the baby if you are afraid. Be aware this may impact future conversations and shared memories with the parents who love their baby and will want to remember and share stories of this time. And the baby may be more beautiful than you expect.
- The baby will not look like a healthy live baby. His/her color might be gray and there may be bruising, blood pooling, floppy arms and legs, and some normal fluid leakage from the nose and other openings (try to overlook these normal effects of death and notice the preciousness of their baby's hands, feet, nose, and lips instead).
- With proper refrigeration, the baby can be kept at home for hours or a few days depending upon state law and circumstances.
- The best way to help deeply anguished parents right now is to support them, offer a hug and condolences, call their baby by name, listen and don't judge them or say hurtful things.
- They need your love and understanding now more than ever!



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