

Consumer Bill of Rights for Funeral Home Establishments

To help protect District consumers, DCRA, in partnership with the DC Board of Funeral Directors and the Office of the Attorney General, have developed the following 12 rights that you can expect when working with a funeral home establishment in Washington, DC.

1. A funeral home establishment must post all of its price lists on any websites that it maintains. This includes the General Price List, the Casket Price List, and the Outer Burial Container Price List.
2. You have the right to see a funeral home establishment's General Price List as soon as you enter the funeral home establishment to make arrangements and may take the list home with you. You may also ask for this information over the telephone, without having to provide any personal information. The General Price List must contain current prices.
3. You have the right to see a Casket Price List as soon as you begin discussing caskets.
4. You have the right to view an Outer Burial Container Price List before the funeral home establishment shows you containers.
5. You do not have to buy a casket from the funeral home establishment (it may cost less online). Funeral home establishments cannot charge a fee for bringing in a casket purchased elsewhere.
6. You do not have to buy an outer burial container from the funeral home establishment. An outer burial container can be purchased from the funeral home establishment, the cemetery, or from an online vendor.
7. You do not have to buy a casket if you choose direct cremation.
8. You do not need to pay for embalming if you are having a direct cremation or immediate burial. The District of Columbia requires authorization from the deceased's next-of-kin or agent to perform embalming services.
9. The funeral home establishment must supply you with receipts for the amounts they paid to third parties (for example, florists, newspapers, or clergy). Under District of Columbia law, when a funeral home establishment utilizes the services of a third party, the funeral home establishment may not charge consumers more than the amount the funeral home establishment paid the third party.
10. You do not have to pay for a package of goods and services. You have the right to select only the goods and services you want, other than the basic services fee, which is a standard fee charged by all funeral home establishments for overhead costs.
11. Once you have made your choices, the funeral home establishment must give you a statement that itemizes the cost of each good and service that you have chosen as part of your signed contract.
12. If you pre-pay for a funeral, you can get a full refund within 30 days of signing the contract, and a refund of at least 90% on services you no longer want 30 days after signing the contract. You can pre-plan a funeral without pre-paying.

If you encounter a funeral home establishment that is not abiding by any part of the Consumer Bill of Rights, please contact the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) at 202-442-4400 or dcra@dc.gov. Or, you may contact the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) at 202-442-9828 or consumer.protection@dc.gov.