

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

DATE: October 7, 2016

TO: Sup. Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Héctor Colón, Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Prepared by: Geri L. Lyday, Administrator, Disabilities Services Division

SUBJECT: **An informational report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), on a partnership with the Archdiocese of Milwaukee for the General Assistance Burials Program**

Background

Earlier this year, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee contacted the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) about the possibility of assisting the County with the burial of the unclaimed.

The leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, declared 2016 as a Jubilee Year of Mercy. The Pope invited Catholics throughout the world to give a special emphasis to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. One of the corporal works of mercy is to bury the dead, which is directly related to the spiritual work of mercy – to pray for the living and the dead. As a concrete and on-going example of the Year of Mercy, the Milwaukee Archdiocese asked Catholic cemeteries to assist with indigent burials in Milwaukee County.

In addition, the Vicar General of the Milwaukee Archdiocese, Fr. Tim Kitzke, learned of the County's General Assistance Burials Program and its unclaimed burials.

Currently, Milwaukee County is responsible for arranging for the burial of the unclaimed. There are approximately 15 to 20 unclaimed deceased per year. The County pays \$1,000 for burial services for each unclaimed decedent.

Discussion

Under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) being drafted between DHHS and the Archdiocese, the provider, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Catholic Cemeteries, will bury the unclaimed on a voluntary basis for the public good without the expectation of reimbursement. Milwaukee County shall make no payment under this agreement for cemetery services rendered. The following process is anticipated to be adopted by the burials program and Catholic Cemeteries:

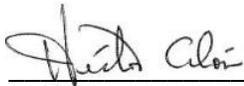
- When Milwaukee County has an unclaimed body, county burial program staff will contact the funeral home and Catholic Cemeteries to provide notification of an unclaimed body.

- The funeral home director would complete the paperwork regarding a responsible party, burial authorization, information regarding the deceased, the filing of the death certificate and call to arrange transportation to the cemetery.
- Catholic Cemeteries would provide a grave, a grave lining, a grave marker (a 24" x 12", single, flush memorial), the actual burial and a ritual of burial.
- The Archdiocese will also hold a short ceremony on behalf of the unclaimed decedent.
- This agreement has been vetted with Corporation Counsel and is scheduled to be implemented November 1, 2016.

This service would be available to all unclaimed deceased regardless of religious affiliation. The intent of the MOA is to provide a dignified burial for a decedent for which no family or legal representative has come forward to claim the deceased. In addition, this MOU allows the burials program to maximize its budget and redirect the savings from the unclaimed burials to providing additional indigent burial services if needed.

Recommendation

This report is informational and no action is required.



Héctor Colón, Director
Department of Health and Human Services

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