

PERSONAL EFFECTS BEST PRACTICE

The AFSRB has approved the following best practices for the handling of personal effects of decedents. The intent of this guideline is to ensure the security and preservation of personal belongings, and to ensure the belongings are dealt with according to the family's wishes.

This best practice will ensure that families are made aware of the items that arrived with the decedent and will ensure the family makes the decision on what happens with these items.

Implementing this best practice may help to mitigate reputational damage and minimize potential risks to the funeral home and funeral services professionals.

The Personal Effects Best Practice is not mandatory for funeral services businesses in the province of Alberta however these are strongly recommended by the AFSRB.

Definitions

- Chain of custody – a recorded means of verifying the items with the deceased and who handled these items at any point. The reason to establish a chain of custody is to document and secure personal items to ensure the family's wishes related to these items are followed.
- Personal effects – any items that arrives with or on the decedent and may include clothing, money, jewelry, etc. Other items found near the deceased may be included with personal effects if the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is involved.

Recommended documentation

Transfer - The decedent and personal belongings are transferred into the care of the funeral services business.

- Information to obtain
 - Name of transfer company or staff member completing the transfer
 - Place of death or location of transfer
 - The list of items documented by the place of transfer (OCME, hospital)
 - Location of belongings being transferred (worn by decedent, separate container, etc)

Intake

- Identify and document the personal effects
- Process
 - Capture the name of individual documenting the personal effects
 - Create an itemized list of personal effects
 - Understand that items that may seem insignificant to you may hold special meaning to the family, so all items must be captured on the list.
 - Consider photographing items
 - Confirmation that the decedent and container have been checked for personal belongings
 - Storage location of potentially valuable items (jewelry, wallet, phone)/other items (clothing, shoes)

Handling of personal effects

- The personal effects of the decedent are handled according to the wishes of the family.
- The role of a funeral professional is to help the bereaved make an informed decision about personal effects that may be soiled or unusable.
- Provide the family with the options for handling the personal effects
- Go over the list of items and confirm the handling of each item with the family
- Information to document
 - Condition of the items (soiled, usable, etc.)
 - Document how each item is to be handled (disposed of, returned, etc.)
 - Ensure the family understands the decisions being made related to the personal effects may be irreversible
 - Example

Item	Requested handling of personal effects (dispose, return, bury or cremate with decedent, etc)	Initials of Authorized representative
Shoes	Soiled/unusable Dispose	
Apple watch	Return to family	

Approved by the AFSRB on June 18, 2025.