

NICC Funeral (Janazah) Policy During the COVID19 Crisis and Information for Families of Muslim Casualties

We pray that you are staying healthy during the current COVID19 crisis and that Allah SWT makes this time easy for you and your family. This message from NICC leadership is meant to share with you some of the important implications of the current COVID19 outbreak on funeral (janazah) services for Muslims in our community who may die of the disease or of other natural causes during this crisis. May Allah SWT protect us all, but it is very possible that members of our own community or our own family members may become ill with COVID19 such that we need to take precautions and be prepared in the event of a death. Please read the following to become familiar with our current policies and planning for these situations and recognize that the situation may change given the rapidly evolving state of the pandemic in our region.

1. The Governor and State health authorities have mandated social distancing by law. The masjid is currently closed to all programs and prayer services such that in the event of a death in the community (from COVID19 or any other cause), there will be no funeral (janazah) prayers held in the masjid. NICC is recommending that prayer services be held at the cemetery outdoors at the gravesite since this practice is supported by the Islamic shari'ah. Our Imam will be available to lead prayers at the gravesite at the request of family. Social distancing (limiting numbers and keeping distance between individuals) should be exercised at the janazah prayer even though it is outdoors as this is important for safety and does not invalidate the janazah prayer.
2. The current process for arranging funeral services has not changed except in the event of a death from COVID19 or when illness with COVID19 was suspected. If the deceased did not die of COVID19 and was not suspected of having it, members of the family should contact NICC for help in arranging the washing (ghusl) and burial.
3. In the event of infection with COVID19, currently hospitals are not allowing visitation by family members to limit the spread of the disease even at the time of death. Muslim families should be prepared for the possibility that a loved one may expire from COVID19 without them being able to be present and attend to them at the time of their death.
4. The body of a person who expires from COVID19 will be potentially infectious to others even after death such that strict controls will be in place for visitation and contact. Ghusl will likely be limited in terms of number of family members (potentially only one person to perform it) and will require personal protective equipment including special masks. Guidance from health authorities will be provided to make this as safe as possible. It is possible that in the event of widespread infection in the region that health authorities will limit our ability to perform ghusl on the body of our deceased, in which case NICC leadership supports following such requirements in respect of the law as recommended by AMJA (see: amjaonline.org/fatwa/en/87734/the-rights-of-the-muslims-who-die-with-covid-19-on-the-muslim-community).
5. In the event of widespread infections and need for severe measures to protect the public, it is possible that the bodies of those who expire from COVID19 may not be immediately released to their families for burial, or there may be restrictions on the timing, type, and location of the burial. Once again, NICC leadership supports complying with the authorities in these issues except in the event that cremation of the body becomes mandated, in which case a religious

exception should be requested since this would be against Islamic teachings. Local and state Muslim organizations will be working with the government authorities to arrange a waiver system in the event this becomes mandated by law, but currently there is no such mandate for cremations in effect or under public consideration such that currently this is only a theoretical possibility.

Once again, please be aware that these guidelines may change as the situation may impact our ability to offer certain services or as legal requirements may change. If you need help or have questions regarding a family member who has expired or is ill and may expire, please contact us for assistance and guidance. May Allah SWT protect our community, and as always, we trust in His decree and pray for patience during this challenging time.

NICC Board of Directors and Imam Sh. Abdelmoneim Dobal