

Funeral Assistance Policy and Procedure

Purpose: To provide clarity and information to Funeral Directors regarding funeral assistance payments from the Lewis County Department of Social Services.

Policy: When a family member or interested 3rd party requests payment for funeral assistance through the Department of Social Services Funeral Assistance program, the funeral firm is required to contact DSS within 24 hours of death or the next business day.

- Contact: **Funeral Assistance Worker at 315-376-5400** during normal business hours; Monday through Friday 8:30AM-4:30 PM

Procedure: The Department of Social Services will determine eligibility for funeral assistance.

Information regarding eligibility:

- If there is a legally responsible relative (spouse of the deceased or parent of a deceased minor child) who are, or have been responsible for his or her support, the relative will be responsible for the burial expense to the extent that they are able to pay in whole or in part.
- If there is no surviving legally responsible relative: the applicant can be any other family member or friend that is arranging for the burial. This person is not responsible for the funeral expenses.
- Eligibility will be determined based on the resources declared in an active Department of Social Services case file such as Temporary Assistance, Medicaid, or SNAP. If there is no active Social Services case, the decision will be based on the information reviewed and submitted from the eligibility interview. Depending on the information available, establishing eligibility can take up to 5 business days.
- The Department of Social Services will take all legal actions needed to recover the cost of Funeral Assistance provided and will pursue reimbursement from the deceased's estate.
- If there is a surviving legally responsible relative, the agency must determine eligibility based on the decedent's resources and income as of the date of death, and those of the legally responsible relative.
 - If there are no resources and the legally responsible relative's income does not exceed the NYS guideline, the Funeral Assistance payment will be approved.
 - If there are available resources and/or the legally responsible relative has income that exceeds the NYS guideline, the Funeral Assistance payment will

be denied and the family notified that they will need to take responsibility for burial payment.

The following terms and conditions apply for the payment for Funeral Assistance by the Lewis County Department of Social Services:

Funeral Home Charges and Necessary Third-Party Charges: For funeral services rendered to eligible individuals by a licensed New York State professional services provider, including personnel, vehicles, and equipment, use of funeral facilities, merchandise, livery and cash expenditures to necessary third parties, the Department will pay to the Funeral Firm the sum stated in the following schedule:

Services	Charges	Notation
Direct Burial / Funeral and Burial	\$3,350	The policy does not specify what services are provided for a "funeral". It is the discretion of the funeral director based on the needs of the family to define what services to provide (graveside service, calling hour(s), funeral service at a church or the funeral home, or combination).
Direct Cremation / Funeral and Cremation	\$2,250	
Stillborn Burial	\$600	20 weeks gestation or greater and fetal death certificate issued.
Anatomical Donation	\$1,300	Funeral home to receive fee from research facility.
Cemetery	Not to exceed \$800	Includes burial plot and opening and closing of grave; funeral home will provide invoice from cemetery to DSS.
Crematory	Actual cost	DSS to reimburse actual cost. Funeral home will provide invoice from crematory to DSS. The county will not reimburse for the burial of created remains or burial plots.
Oversize Casket	Actual Cost	Oversized casket and liner at the extra cost of the difference between the standard casket/liner and oversized casket/liner, Funeral home to provide invoice.

These are minimum requirements, and a funeral home or funeral director may go above and beyond for a family at their own discretion and expense.

Services performed without prior authorization by Lewis County Department of Social Services shall not be reimbursed.

Supplementation: Supplementation by a non-legally responsible party is allowed, but not compulsory, for additional services, merchandise and third-party expenditures with a total cap of \$1,500. Patient Incidental Accounts (PIA) are not to be used for supplementation. Legally responsible relatives are not allowed to supplement funeral services and would result in the application being denied.

The Department of Social Services is the last resort for payment of funeral services; any solicitation by family or friends for monetary donations through crowdfunding sites such as GoFundMe or Facebook, will result in denial of Funeral Assistance payment.

Winter Deaths: When the death occurs during the winter season and burial is elected, and the selected cemetery is unable or unwilling to perform the burial due to winter conditions, the Department shall authorize payment for the applicable winter vault storage fee.

Death Notice: The funeral firm selected may publish a free Death Notice; however, the Department of Social Services will not authorize payment for a published obituary.

Transportation Charges: Allowable transportation charges for remains are paid at the rate of \$1.85 per loaded mile and shall include but not be limited to:

- The removal from place of death, morgue or other location to the funeral home
- Transportation to the cemetery, mausoleum or other final resting place of the deceased.
- Transportation to and/or from a crematorium
- In the rare instance of transportation necessary by a common carrier, it shall first be approved by the Commissioner of Social Services, or the Director of Economic Supports, and shall be billed by the funeral firm to the Lewis County Department of Social Services, at cost, plus \$50 to cover administration expenses to arrange for the same.
- Transportation of the deceased to an authorized hospital or medical center for the purposes of a coroner/medical examiner-ordered autopsy or other postmortem examination shall follow the County of Lewis policy per Resolution 266-2024. Should the decedent be eligible for DSS funeral assistance the Lewis County District Attorney's office shall send the invoice for transportation to Lewis County DSS for consideration of reimbursement.

Payment: Itemized bills for approved burials should be sent to:
Lewis County Department of Social Services
Funeral Assistance Unit
PO Box 193
Lowville, New York 13367

Special Considerations:

1. Exceptions to this policy may be made if approved by the Commissioner of Social Services or the Director of Economic Supports.

Reference:

Reference Funeral Assistance Policy Resolution No. 192-2026 attached to this fact sheet.

RESOLUTION NO. 192 - 2026

REPEALING THE INDIGENT BURIAL POLICY AND PROCEDURES AND ADOPTING THE LEWIS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES FUNERAL ASSISTANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Introduced by Legislator Thomas Kalamas, Chair of the Human Services Committee.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 141 of the New York State Social Services Law, counties are authorized to provide assistance for funeral and burial expenses for eligible individuals when no other legally responsible person or resources are available to pay such expenses; and

WHEREAS, the Lewis County Department of Social Services has reviewed its existing Indigent Burial Policy and Procedures and determined that revisions are necessary to ensure compliance with current State law and regulations, improve administrative efficiency, clarify eligibility requirements and payment procedures, and provide consistent guidance to funeral service providers and applicants; and

WHEREAS, the revised Funeral Assistance Policy and Procedures establish eligibility criteria, define allowable services and reimbursement rates, outline the responsibilities of applicants and funeral firms, specify payment procedures, and provide for limited exceptions as approved by the Commissioner of Social Services or the Director of Economic Supports; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Legislators finds that adoption of the revised Funeral Assistance Policy and Procedures is in the best interests of Lewis County and will provide a clear and uniform process for the administration of funeral assistance benefits;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED as follows:

Section 1. The Lewis County Board of Legislators hereby repeals the existing Indigent Burial Policy and Procedures, together with any amendments thereto, effective August 4, 2026.

Section 2. The Lewis County Board of Legislators hereby adopts the Lewis County Department of Social Services Funeral Assistance Policy and Procedures, attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference, to govern the administration of funeral assistance provided pursuant to New York State Social Services Law §141, effective August 4, 2026.

Section 3. The Commissioner of Social Services is authorized to administer the Funeral Assistance Policy and Procedures, interpret and implement the provisions

thereof, establish administrative forms and procedures consistent with the policy, and approve exceptions as specifically authorized within the policy.

Section 4. The Commissioner of Social Services shall periodically review the Funeral Assistance Policy and Procedures and may recommend amendments to the Board of

Legislators as necessary to ensure continued compliance with applicable federal and state laws, regulations, and administrative guidance.

Moved by Legislator Nellenback , seconded by Legislator Leviker , and adopted on the 4th day of August, 2026.