

Funeral Director (Mortician)

■ Job Description

The funeral director is usually contacted at the time of a person's death. The funeral director arranges to have the body transferred to the funeral home and prepares the body for final disposition, according to state laws. The director completes the required paperwork (e.g., burial permits, death certificate) and arranges the service, carrying out family wishes and supervising details of the service. After the service, the director may assist family members as they file claims for social security, veteran's and union benefits, and insurance. The funeral director often becomes involved in post-death counseling and support group activities.

■ Job Settings

Funeral homes or related businesses. Almost one in five funeral directors were self-employed in 2000.

■ Projected Need

In Illinois, the number of jobs for funeral directors is expected to increase at an average rate through 2010. Nationally, slower than average employment growth is expected for this occupation. The number of people over 55 will grow rapidly in the next decade. As the population grows older and passes away, the demand for funeral and memorial services will increase. However, the number of small funeral homes is declining because they are being bought out by large corporations. In the past, each funeral home had one or more funeral directors. Now, a smaller number of funeral directors may work at all the funeral homes that are owned by a single corporation.

The need to replace funeral directors who retire or leave the occupation for other reasons will account for more job openings than employment growth.

In Illinois, there were about 1,640 people employed in this small occupation in 2000.

■ Salaries

Nationally, funeral directors earn a median wage of \$20.20 per hour. Half of all funeral directors earn between \$15.41 and \$27.24 per hour.

In Illinois, the median entry-level wage for funeral directors is \$11.93. Those with experience earn \$29.71 per hour.

■ Related Careers

If students are interested in the business aspect of mortuary science, they may wish to consider sales in allied industries or higher level management in funeral service. If an individual is interested in helping families deal with illness and death, psychology, medical social work, or ministry could provide alternatives.

■ Differences in Training

College programs in mortuary science usually last from two to four years. Mortuary science programs include courses in anatomy, physiology, embalming techniques, restorative art, business management, and use of computers in funeral home management. They also include courses in the social sciences and legal, ethical, and regulatory subjects. Students who graduate from mortuary school are called mortuary science technicians.

Mortuary science technicians must complete an apprenticeship or one-on-one training with a licensed embalmer or funeral director. Depending on state regulations, this training lasts from one to three years. This training may take place before, during, or after finishing mortuary school. There are four mortuary science programs offered in Illinois: Carl Sandburg College, Malcolm X College, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, and Worsham College of Mortuary Science.

■ Related Educational Programs

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/>. You must log into CIS prior to clicking on the links below.

[Funeral Service and Mortuary Science](#)

■ **Credentials**

Funeral directors must be licensed in all states, except Colorado. In Illinois, funeral directors and embalmers have a combined license. Licensing applicants must complete 30 semester hours of college credit plus a 12-month course of study in an approved program of mortuary science or an associate's or bachelor's degree in mortuary science, pass the state board exam, and serve a one-year internship.

■ **Resources**

Illinois Funeral Directors Association
215 S. Grand Avenue West
Springfield, IL 62704-3838
Phone: 800.240.4332
<http://www.ifda.org>

Twelve scholarships of \$750 each are available to Illinois residents studying mortuary science in a college in Illinois.

National Funeral Directors Association
13625 Bishop's Drive
Brookfield, WI 53005
Phone: 800.228.6332
E-mail: nfda@nfda.org
<http://www.nfda.org>
Select "About Funeral Service" then "Careers."

American Board of Funeral Service Education
38 Florida Avenue
Portland, ME 04103
Phone: 207.878.6530
<http://www.abfse.org>
Click on the "FAQs" button.

Fifty scholarships of \$250 or \$500 are available to students who have completed at least one term of study in an accredited funeral service or mortuary science education program. Recipients are chosen on the basis of financial need and other factors.