



## **Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington, Inc.**

April, 2020

In light of the continuing health crisis in which the country finds itself, we thought it would be helpful to inform you of certain changes in normal procedures relating to funerals being conducted under the auspices of the contracts between the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington and Hines Rinaldi Funeral Home (Silver Spring MD) and Cunningham Turch Funeral Home (Alexandria VA).

1. First, both funeral homes are still operating, and each is taking additional steps to ensure the cleanliness of their facilities.
2. Hines Rinaldi is not holding funerals in its chapel facilities and, to the best of our knowledge, synagogues are not holding funerals in their facilities. Thus, all funerals are now gravesite.
3. Families are encouraged to invite only those closest to the deceased to a gravesite funeral. Generally, no more than ten people should be at a funeral - and of course, they should not be ill or exposed themselves, and should maintain social distancing.
4. Some cemeteries, such as Judean Gardens, have instituted more stringent procedures, not permitting anyone other than a clergy member to attend a burial.
5. The Orthodox city wide chevra kadisha (men and women) is still operating, with modifications of tahara practices when appropriate. Synagogues with their own chevra kadisha are taking different approaches - some have ceased to perform tahara at all at present, while others have modified their practices, but continue to operate.
6. The funeral homes are still providing facilities for shmira (sitting with/guarding the body), and ensuring the cleanliness of facilities. Some synagogues are continuing to provide shomrim, while others are

not currently doing so. The shmira service provided by the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee continues to operate, and we are working with Hines Rinaldi closely to ensure that there is never more than one person sitting in the shmira room at any time.

7. Shiva visits and live shiva minyans are being strongly discouraged.

For general information about the effect of COVID-19 on Jewish funerals, we suggest you look at the website of Kvod v'Nichum at ***www.jewish-funerals.org***. For information about the contracts between the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee, Hines Rinaldi and Cunningham Turch, go to ***dc.jewish-funerals.org***, and click on "contracts". For questions about our shmira program, contact David Kaye at 301-602-4563. For religious questions, please contact your rabbi, or whomever you would contact for advice, and for practices at individual synagogues, please contact the synagogue for guidance. For general questions, feel free to contact Arthur Hessel, president of the Committee, at 202-569-4289, or David Zinner, vice-president, at 410-733-3700.

These are obviously unusual times, and circumstances change daily. While sometimes adding additional complications to times of great distress, this is a time to be flexible to the extent possible.