

## Mourning In the Midst of the COVID-19/coronavirus Pandemic

While each tribal nation has unique traditional and cultural practices regarding death, burial and mourning, they all currently face the challenge of honoring traditional lifeways and protecting each other from the spread of the COVID-19/Novel Corona Virus. Large gatherings, such as wakes, visitations and funerals offer the perfect conditions for wide scale spread of the virus.

The following are precautions and suggestions to consider regarding the mourning of deceased loved ones and protecting living family, friends and community members.

### **Wakes, Visitations and Funerals COVID-19/coronavirus Protocols**

- Provide each attendee with a mask and gloves to be worn throughout the event
- Provide hand sanitizer and encourage attendees to use it upon entering and leaving the building and signing guest books
- Assure restrooms have soap and paper towels, washing your hands with soap offers the best removal of the COVID-19/coronavirus from hands
- Limit one visitor at a time in the room for viewings
- Limit funeral attendance to 10 or less people
- Hold immediate family funerals and postpone memorial services and gatherings until after the COVID-19/coronavirus Pandemic has ended
- Limit grave site attendance to spiritual leaders, immediate family and pall bearers
- Practice social distancing of 6 feet from person to person in churches, community centers and at grave sites, avoid close personal contact (example hugging or kissing)
- If tribal protocol does not prohibit photography/filming at funerals, live stream funerals to family members and friends via FaceTime, Zoom or another streaming service
- Encourage family and friends not to travel from out of town to attend
- Encourage children under the age of 12 and elders over the age of 55, and anyone who is sick or has a compromised immune system from illness, chemotherapy treatment, dialysis, etc. not to attend for their protection
- For the safety of the community, postpone funeral meals and gatherings until AFTER the social distancing guidelines have been lifted
- If meals and/or gatherings are required by custom
  - Limit attendance to family and cultural leaders
  - Assemble guest seating in accordance with social distancing guidelines spaced 6 feet apart
  - Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds prior to preparing and serving meals
  - Prepare and serve meals wearing masks and gloves
  - Use disposable plates, cups, silverware and napkins OR wash dishes, silverware and cups in a dishwasher, if available
  - Package and send food to go as an alternative to sit down meals