

California Health and Safety Code

Section 102850

A physician and surgeon, physician assistant, funeral director, or other person shall immediately notify the coroner when he or she has knowledge of a death that occurred or has charge of a body in which death occurred under any of the following circumstances:

- (a) Without medical attendance.
- (b) During the continued absence of the attending physician and surgeon.
- (c) Where the attending physician and surgeon or the physician assistant is unable to state the cause of death.
- (d) Where suicide is suspected.
- (e) Following an injury or an accident.
- (f) Under circumstances as to afford a reasonable ground to suspect that the death was caused by the criminal act of another.

Any person who does not notify the coroner as required by this section is guilty of a misdemeanor.

Section 7100

(a) **The right to control the disposition of the remains of a deceased person**, the location and conditions of interment, and arrangements for funeral goods and services to be provided, unless other directions have been given by the decedent pursuant to Section 7100.1, vests in, and the duty of disposition and the liability for the reasonable cost of disposition of the remains devolves upon, **the following in the order named:**

(1) **An agent under a power of attorney for health care** who has the right and duty of disposition under Division 4.7 (commencing with Section 4600) of the Probate Code, except that the agent is liable for the costs of disposition only in either of the following cases:

- (A) Where the agent makes a specific agreement to pay the costs of disposition.
- (B) Where, in the absence of a specific agreement, the agent makes decisions concerning disposition that incur costs, in which case the agent is liable only for the reasonable costs incurred as a result of the agent's decisions, to the extent that the decedent's estate or other appropriate fund is insufficient.

(2) **The competent surviving spouse.**

(3) **The sole surviving competent adult child of the decedent**, or if there is more than one competent adult child of the decedent, the majority of the surviving competent adult children. However, less than the majority of the surviving competent adult children shall be vested with the rights and duties of this section if they have used reasonable efforts to notify all other surviving competent adult children of their instructions and are not aware of any opposition to those instructions by the majority of all surviving competent adult children.

(4) **The surviving competent parent or parents of the decedent**. If one of the surviving competent parents is absent, the remaining competent parent shall be vested with the rights and duties of this section after reasonable efforts have been unsuccessful in locating the absent surviving competent parent.

(5) **The sole surviving competent adult sibling of the decedent**, or if there is more than one surviving competent adult sibling of the decedent, the majority of the surviving competent adult siblings. However, less than the majority of the surviving competent adult siblings shall be vested with the rights and duties of this section if they have used reasonable efforts to notify all other surviving competent adult siblings of their instructions and are not aware of any opposition to those instructions by the majority of all surviving competent adult siblings.

(6) **The surviving competent adult person or persons respectively in the next degrees of kinship**, or if there is more than one surviving competent adult person of the same degree of kinship, the majority of those persons. Less than the majority of surviving competent adult persons of the same degree of kinship shall be vested with the rights and duties of this section if those persons have used reasonable efforts to notify all other surviving competent adult persons of the same degree of kinship of their instructions and are not aware of any opposition to those instructions by the majority of all surviving competent adult persons of the same degree of kinship.

(7) **The public administrator** when the deceased has sufficient assets.

(b)

(1) If any person to whom the right of control has vested pursuant to subdivision (a) has been charged with first or second degree murder or voluntary manslaughter in connection with the decedent's death and those charges are known to the funeral director or cemetery authority, the right of control is relinquished and passed on to the next of kin in accordance with subdivision (a).

(2) If the charges against the person are dropped, or if the person is acquitted of the charges, the right of control is returned to the person.

(3) Notwithstanding this subdivision, no person who has been charged with first or second degree murder or voluntary manslaughter in connection with the decedent's death to whom the right of control has not been returned pursuant to paragraph (2) shall have any right to control disposition pursuant to subdivision (a) which shall be applied, to the extent the funeral director or cemetery authority know about the charges, as if that person did not exist.

(c) A funeral director or cemetery authority shall have complete authority to control the disposition of the remains, and to proceed under this chapter to recover usual and customary charges for the disposition, when both of the following apply:

(1) Either of the following applies:

(A) The funeral director or cemetery authority has knowledge that none of the persons described in paragraphs (1) to (6), inclusive, of subdivision (a) exists.

(B) None of the persons described in paragraphs (1) to (6), inclusive, of subdivision (a) can be found after reasonable inquiry, or contacted by reasonable means.

(2) The public administrator fails to assume responsibility for disposition of the remains within seven days after having been given written notice of the facts. Written notice may be delivered by hand, U.S. mail, facsimile transmission, or telegraph.

(d) The liability for the reasonable cost of final disposition devolves jointly and severally upon all kin of the decedent in the same degree of kinship and upon the estate of the decedent. However, if a person accepts the gift of an entire body under subdivision (a) of Section 7155.5, that person, subject to the terms of the gift, shall be liable for the reasonable cost of final disposition of the decedent.

(e) This section shall be administered and construed to the end that the expressed instructions of the decedent or the person entitled to control the disposition shall be faithfully and promptly performed.

(f) A funeral director or cemetery authority shall not be liable to any person or persons for carrying out the instructions of the decedent or the person entitled to control the disposition.

(g) For purposes of this section, "adult" means an individual who has attained 18 years of age, "child" means a natural or adopted child of the decedent, and "competent" means an individual who has not been declared incompetent by a court of law or who has been declared competent by a court of law following a declaration of incompetence.

Section 7100.1

(a) A decedent, prior to death, may direct, in writing, the disposition of his or her remains and specify funeral goods and services to be provided. Unless there is a statement to the contrary that is signed and dated by the decedent, the directions may not be altered, changed, or otherwise amended in any material way, except as may be required by law, and shall be faithfully carried out upon his or her death, provided both of the following requirements are met:

(1) the directions set forth clearly and completely the final wishes of the decedent in sufficient detail so as to preclude any material ambiguity with regard to the instructions; and,

(2) arrangements for payment through trusts, insurance, commitments by others, or any other effective and binding means, have been made, so as to preclude the payment of any funds by the survivor or survivors of the deceased that might otherwise retain the right to control the disposition.

(b) In the event arrangements for only one of either the cost of interment or the cost of the funeral goods and services are made pursuant to this section, the remaining wishes of the decedent shall be carried out only to the extent that the decedent has sufficient assets to do so, unless the person or persons that otherwise have the right to control the disposition and arrange for funeral goods and services agree to assume the cost. All other provisions of the directions shall be carried out.

(c) If the directions are contained in a will, they shall be immediately carried out, regardless of the validity of the will in other respects or of the fact that the will may not be offered for or admitted to probate until a later date.

Section 7101

When any decedent leaves an estate in this state, the reasonable cost of interment and an interment plot of sufficient size to constitute a family plot and memorial including reasonable sums for either, or both, general and special endowment care of the plot proportionate to the value of the estate and in keeping with the standard of living adopted by the decedent prior to his demise, together with interest thereon from 60 days after the date of death, shall be considered as a part of the funeral expenses of the decedent and shall be paid as a preferred charge against his estate as provided in the Probate Code.

Reasonable costs of funeral services, together with interest thereon from 60 days after the date of death, shall be considered as a part of the funeral expenses of the decedent and shall be paid as a preferred charge against his estate as provided in the Probate Code.

If a claim for mortuary and funeral services, an interment plot or memorial is rejected the burden of proving that the cost of the funeral service, interment plot or memorial is disproportionate to the value of the estate and the standard of living adopted by the decedent while living shall be upon the executor or administrator rejecting the claim. This chapter does not prohibit any relative or friend of a decedent from assuming the duty or paying the expense of interment or the funeral services.

Section 7102

When a person is charged by law with the duty of interment he is entitled to the custody of the remains for the purpose of interment or, with respect to cremated remains, for the purpose of burial at sea in accordance with the provisions of this division; except that in any case where a coroner is required by law to investigate the cause of death, the coroner is entitled to the custody of the remains of the person whose death is the subject of investigation until the conclusion of the autopsy or medical investigation by the coroner. Any person in whose possession such remains are found, shall, upon demand by the coroner, surrender such remains to him.

Section 7103

(a) Every person, upon whom the duty of interment is imposed by law, who omits to perform that duty within a reasonable time is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(b) Every licensee or registrant pursuant to Chapter 12 (commencing with Section 7600) or Chapter 19 (commencing with Section 9600) of Division 3 of the Business and Professions Code, and the agents and employees of the licensee or registrant, or any unlicensed person acting in a capacity in which a license from the Cemetery and Funeral Bureau is required, upon whom the duty of interment is imposed by law, who omits to perform that duty within a reasonable time is guilty of a misdemeanor that shall be punishable by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding one year, by a fine not exceeding ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), or both that imprisonment and fine.

(c) In addition, any person, registrant, or licensee described in subdivision (a) or (b) is liable to pay the person performing the duty in his or her stead treble the expenses incurred by the latter in making the interment, to be recovered in a civil action.

Section 7104

(a) When no provision is made by the decedent, or where the estate is insufficient to provide for interment and the duty of interment does not devolve upon any other person residing in the state or if such person can not after reasonable diligence be found within the state the person who has custody of the remains may require the coroner of the county

where the decedent resided at time of death to take possession of the remains and the coroner shall inter the remains in the manner provided for the interment of indigent dead.

(b) A county exercising jurisdiction over the death of an individual pursuant to Section 27491, or who assumes jurisdiction pursuant to Section 27491.55 of the Government Code, shall be responsible for the disposition of the remains of that decedent. If the decedent is an indigent, the costs associated with disposition of the remains shall be borne by the county exercising jurisdiction.

Section 7104.1

If, within 30 days after the coroner notifies or diligently attempts to notify the person responsible for the interment of a decedent's remains which are in the possession of the coroner, the person fails, refuses, or neglects to inter the remains, the coroner may inter the remains. The coroner may recover any expenses of the interment from the responsible person.

Section 7105

(a) **If the person** or persons listed in paragraphs (1), (3), (4), (5), and (6) of subdivision (a) of Section 7100 that would otherwise have **the right to control the disposition** and arrange for funeral goods and services **fails to act**, or fails to delegate his or her authority to act to some other person **within seven days of the date when the right and duty devolves** upon the person or persons, or in the case of a person listed in paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 7100, within 10 days of the date when the right and duty devolves upon the person, the right to control the disposition and arrange for funeral goods and services **shall be relinquished and passed on to the person or persons of the next degree of kinship** in accordance with subdivision (a) of Section 7100.

(b) **If the person** or persons listed in paragraphs (1), (3), (4), (5), and (6) of subdivision (a) of Section 7100 that **would otherwise have the right to control the disposition** and arrange for funeral goods and services **cannot be found within seven days** of the date when the right and duty devolves upon the person or persons, **or** in the case of a person listed in paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 7100, **within 10 days** of the date when the right and duty devolves upon the person, **after reasonable inquiry**, the right to control the disposition and arrange for funeral goods and services **shall be relinquished and passed on to the person or persons of the next degree of kinship** in accordance with subdivision (a) of Section 7100.

(c) If any persons listed in paragraphs (1), (3), (4), (5), and (6), of subdivision (a) of Section 7100 that would otherwise have equal rights to control the disposition and arrange for

funeral goods and services fail to agree on disposition and funeral goods and services to be provided within seven days of the date on which the right and duty of disposition devolved upon the persons, a funeral establishment or a cemetery authority having possession of the remains, or any person who has equal right to control the disposition of the remains may file a petition in the superior court in the county in which the decedent resided at the time of his or her death, or in which the remains are located, naming as a party to the action those persons who would otherwise have equal rights to control the disposition and seeking an order of the court determining, as appropriate, who among those parties will have the control of disposition and to direct that person to make interment of the remains. The court, at the time of determining the person to whom the right of disposition will vest, shall, from the remaining parties to the action, establish an alternate order to whom the right to control disposition will pass if the person vested with the right to control disposition fails to act within seven days.

(d) If the person vested with the duty of interment has criminal charges pending against him or her for the unlawful killing of the decedent, in violation of Section 187 of, or subdivision (a) or (b) of Section 192 of, the Penal Code, the person or persons with the next highest priority prescribed by Section 7100 may petition a court of competent jurisdiction for an order for control of the disposition of the decedent's remains. For this purpose, it shall be conclusively presumed that the petitioner is the person entitled to control the disposition of the remains if the petitioner is next in the order of priority specified in Section 7100.

Section 7110

Any person signing any authorization for the interment or cremation of any remains warrants the truthfulness of any fact set forth in the authorization, the identity of the person whose remains are sought to be interred or cremated, and his or her authority to order interment or cremation. He or she is personally liable for all damage occasioned by or resulting from breach of such warranty.

Section 7150.40

(a) Subject to subdivisions (b) and (c), and unless barred by Section 7150.30 or 7150.35, an anatomical gift of a decedent's body or part for the purpose of transplantation, therapy, research, or education may be made by any member of the following classes of persons who is reasonably available, in the following order of priority:

(1) An agent of the decedent at the time of death who could have made an anatomical gift under subdivision (b) of Section 7150.15 immediately before the decedent's death.

(2) The spouse or domestic partner of the decedent.

(3) Adult children of the decedent.

(4) Parents of the decedent.

(5) Adult siblings of the decedent.

(6) Adult grandchildren of the decedent.

(7) Grandparents of the decedent.

(8) An adult who exhibited special care and concern for the decedent during the decedent's lifetime.

(9) The persons who were acting as the guardians or conservators of the person of the decedent at the time of death.

(10)

(A) Any other person having the authority to dispose of the decedent's body, including, but not limited to, a coroner, medical examiner, or hospital administrator, provided that reasonable effort has been made to locate and inform persons listed in paragraphs (1) to (9), inclusive, of their option to make, or object to making, an anatomical gift.

(B) Except in the case where the useful life of the part does not permit, a reasonable effort shall be deemed to have been made when a search for the persons has been underway for at least 12 hours. The search shall include a check of local police missing persons records, examination of personal effects, and the questioning of any persons visiting the decedent before his or her death or in the hospital, accompanying the decedent's body, or reporting the death, in order to obtain information that might lead to the location of any persons listed.

(b) If there is more than one member of a class listed in paragraph (1), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), or (9) of subdivision (a) entitled to make an anatomical gift, an anatomical gift may be made by a member of the class unless that member or a person to which the gift may pass under Section 7150.50 knows of an objection by another member of the class. If an objection is known, the gift may be made only by a majority of the members of the class who are reasonably available.

(c) A person shall not make an anatomical gift if, at the time of the decedent's death, a person in a prior class under subdivision (a) is reasonably available to make, or to object to the making of, an anatomical gift.