

Honoring Cultural Diversity at End-of-Life

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Customs and Events

End-of-Life services often include religious or spiritual elements. A brief overview of Hindu, Jewish and Muslim services follows to help you understand the customs of these cultures and religions.

Hindu Services

A Hindu priest conducts the service within 24 hours after death. Mourners dress casually in white clothes. Guests do not exchange greetings or bring offerings but instead nod or embrace in sympathy. Seasonal flowers and garlands may be laid in the open casket.

A ceremony ten days after death liberates the deceased's soul into Heaven. Visitors bring fruit offerings.

Jewish Services

Attendees wear dark-colored clothing to express grief. Men wear a head covering or yarmulke provided by the funeral home.

Judaism teaches that an important mitzvah or commandment is to help a deceased loved one to their final resting place. Placing earth in the grave is powerful and symbolic.

Immediate family sits in mourning or Shiva for seven days following the burial. Family and friends may pay respects with desserts, fruit and kosher food baskets or donations. Flowers are not appropriate during Shiva.

Muslim Services

Islamic laws or sharia states mandates that the deceased's remains be buried as soon as possible after death. Contact a local Islamic community organization to arrange final services and determine whether flowers are welcome. Palm branches, other greens or flowers are often placed on a Muslim grave.

Learn More

To learn more about honoring diversity at End-of-Life, ask healthcare or hospice professionals, religious and spiritual leaders, ethnic or cultural organizations and service providers for guidance.