Instructions for Completing a Funeral Price Survey Grid Funeral Consumers Alliance, Inc. 2008

This set of instructions should help you fill in a spreadsheet for a funeral price survey. Once you've gathered all the General Price Lists from the funeral homes you are surveying, follow these steps to fill in the spreadsheet. These instructions use sample pages from the Memorial Society of Rhode Island's 2008 funeral price survey spreadsheet as the example. You can delete the numbers and funeral home names in the accompanying spreadsheet and substitute your own. The spreadsheet will open in Microsoft Excel, though you may have to do so reformatting (borders on cells, bold text, etc.) to make it look the way you want.

If you look at the accompanying spreadsheet, you'll see each funeral home has a list of 9 items that when totaled, equal the "Total Full Service Funeral Without Casket." First, enter the prices given on the funeral home's GPL for the following nine items. Then, add them all together to reach the total

NOTE FOR NEW YORK STATE — In New York, funeral homes list the **staff** for a funeral service separately from the **facilities** for a funeral service. You'll need to add **staff and facilities charges together f**or viewing, funeral ceremony, memorial service, and graveside ceremony, in order to complete the accompanying spreadsheet.

- 1. Basic services fee
- **2.** Embalming
- **3.** Other preparation of the body for this, add together the separate charges for dressing, casketing, and cosmetology, if those are listed separately. If there is no such charge, leave it blank.
- **4.** Viewing (also called "Visitation")
- **5.** Funeral ceremony
- **6.** Body removal (usually called "transfer of remains" on the price list; I prefer to state it directly to consumers rather than using industry euphemisms). Use the base local charge most funeral homes will pick up within a 25-30 mile radius before adding mileage fees.
- 7. Hearse use the base, local charge.
- **8.** Limousine (or family car) List the lowest price offered. If they offer a 6 passenger and a 10, list the 6-passenger.
- **9.** Graveside service

Now you should have your total for a hypothetical "traditional" full service funeral.

Other Items to List in Your Survey

- 11. Cheapest Casket and Cheapest vault every price list should have a price range for these. If it does not, it's violating the Federal Trade Commission's Funeral Rule.
- **12.** Immediate Burial List the cost without the casket, because the customer has the option of buying a casket from outside the funeral home. If that option isn't listed, the funeral home is violating the FTC Funeral Rule.
- 13. Direct Cremation List the cost **with** the alternative container, because most people aren't going to bother bringing their own cardboard box (unlike casket customers, who may indeed bring in a cheaper, outside casket).

IMPORTANT - Our surveys add a \$300 fee to the cost of direct cremation in cases where the funeral home's description of its direct cremation does **not** include the crematory fee. If the funeral home discloses the exact crematory fee elsewhere, add that fee to the price of the direct cremation. Obviously, if the funeral home's description of direct cremation includes the crematory fee, do not add any additional fees.

Yes, some funeral homes are going to complain, and say "That's not my price!" The answer to that is, "Oh, yes it is. When a consumer buys a cremation, they expect your price to actually include the cremation. ..why don't you disclose that? Consumers will end up paying about \$300 more when you hit them with the crematory fee after the fact. Wouldn't you rather head off possible hard feelings ahead of time by being upfront?" As long as you've noted on the price list that this is your method and that the fee is added, you've done your duty.

- **14.** Forwarding and Receiving Remains these are self explanatory.
- **15.** Sanitary Care for ID View This is the charge for washing the body down, closing the mouth and the eyes, and getting it ready for a private family viewing. It's optional, or it should be. Remember, funeral homes may not impose this service or charge on a family, although some funeral homes do so illegally. If you find that such a fee is included in the costs of Direct Cremation or Immediate Burial, you should note on your survey that the consumer has the right to decline this service and get a reduction in the total charge.

Questions? Call Executive Director Josh Slocum at 800-765-0107 or email josh@funerals.org