

NEWS & INSIGHTS

Philadelphia restricts funerals through January 1

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The below information is current as of the publication date listed. Because COVID-19 response measures on all fronts are continually evolving, clients should stay alert to new developments and consult with counsel on any critical questions.

In response to rising COVID-19 cases, Philadelphia has prohibited indoor gatherings, including funerals beginning this Friday, November 20, 2020 through January 1, 2021.

On November 16, the city's Department of Public Health announced [new "Safer at Home" restrictions](#), which

prohibit all indoor gatherings and events involving people from more than one household, in public or private spaces, specifically including funerals.

Religious institutions are permitted to continue indoor gatherings, meaning that funeral services in a church should be able to continue; however, attendance is limited to five people per 1,000 square feet or five percent of maximum occupancy, whichever is less.

Outdoor gatherings, such as graveside services, may continue but are limited to 10 percent of maximum capacity of the space, or 10 people per 1,000 square feet and not to exceed 2,000 people at any event. To reinforce mask use, neither food nor beverages may be served.

The new restrictions also ban many other events and gatherings, including indoor dining, in-person learning for high schools and colleges, and most recreation activities. Retail stores may continue to operate but with a maximum density of five people per 1,000 square feet and must continue to enforce mask use and social distancing.

These restrictions are some of the harshest imposed in response to COVID-19 case counts which have now reached all-time highs.

New Jersey also announced a retightening of restrictions, limiting indoor gatherings to 10 people and outdoor to 150. However, [funerals were allowed to continue](#), limited to the lesser of 150 people or 25% of a room's capacity.

Gov. Tom Wolf [urged Pennsylvanians](#) "to be united in wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, washing our hands and avoiding gatherings" but has yet to announce new statewide restrictions.

Saxton & Stump attorney [Jason Benion](#) is available to assist [death care](#) businesses and professionals with these and other issues regarding operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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