

NEWS & INSIGHTS

Pennsylvania increases gathering limits and State Registrar offers guidance for FEMA funeral benefits

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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.

On May 11, 2021, Gov. Tom Wolf [announced](#) that event and gathering maximum occupancy limits will be increased

to 50 percent for indoor events and gatherings and 75 percent for outdoor events and gatherings effective Monday, May 17, 2021.

This relaxation of gathering limits follows the Wolf administration's [announcement](#) that other COVID-19 mitigation orders, except masking, will be lifted on Monday, May 31, 2021.

The current order requiring Pennsylvanians to wear masks will be lifted when 70 percent of Pennsylvanians age 18 and older are fully vaccinated. Until then, mask requirements still apply to attendees and staff at events and gatherings, although fully-vaccinated people are not required to wear a mask during [certain activities](#), including visiting indoors with other fully-vaccinated people or unvaccinated people from a single household who are at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease.

The State Registrar has also issued [guidance](#) regarding COVID-19-related funeral benefits available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). State Registrar Notice 2021-04 notes that an application for FEMA benefits requires an official death certificate that indicates the decedent's death was attributed to COVID-19 and, therefore, applicants must provide a Pennsylvania comprehensive death certificate, instead of a standard death certificate.

Related article: [FEMA announces details of COVID-19 funeral assistance program](#)

Related article: [Start date, application information and clarifications for FEMA funeral assistance program](#)

The State Registrar also provided instructions on amending a death certificate to add COVID-19 as a cause of death, including the documentary evidence required.

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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