Supporting Survivors of Suicide Loss: A Guide for Funeral Directors was developed through a collaboration of the Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPAN USA) and the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) with funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The Guide’s purpose is to provide funeral directors with a greater understanding of the issue of suicide as it relates to their profession.

Topics covered in the Guide include:
• Why suicide is different than other types of deaths.
• How to avoid stigmatizing those who’ve died by suicide.
• How to be sensitive to the needs of survivors of suicide loss.
• How to deal with compassion fatigue.
• Frequently asked questions about suicide loss.
• Resources for funeral directors and their clients.
• Recommended readings.

The Guide was developed by SPAN USA and SPRC staff and reviewed by the National Funeral Directors Association.

Objectives:

After reading the Guide, funeral directors should have:
1. Increased knowledge about suicide and ways to support those bereaved by a suicide loss.
2. Increased knowledge of available resources for funeral directors and survivors of suicide loss.
3. Increased skill in choosing words that are helpful to survivors and do not reinforce stigma associated with suicide.
4. Increased capacity to identify suicide risk factors and warning signs and refer survivors to mental health providers as appropriate.

Implementation Essential:
• Funeral directors should be aware of local and national support services for survivors of suicide loss and others who may be at risk for suicide.