

Best Practices attending a Funeral, Memorial Service or Visitation with your C4C Therapy Dog

By Lisa Stapleton, Texas Licensed Funeral Director

Always remember to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you and lead you to where He wants you

1. Representing C4C at funerals (etc) you are not required to have completed the Crisis Response training.
2. Please make sure your dog has been fed, watered and has gone to the bathroom. Make sure they are clean. General rule do not work your dog for more than two hours.
3. Your attire should be modest and respectable. Remember, you're typically going to be in a church or a chapel or someplace where people are gathered and are very sensitive.
4. If you wear your C4C red shirt, it is suggested that you add a black or dark blazer or cardigan over it. Your C4C lanyard can be worn or clipped to appropriate clothing for the situation. Please do not wear ball caps, tennis shoes or flip-flops.
5. When people see you with your dog, most of them will think you have come to the service with your own personal service dog. They will not realize that you are there for them. It will be necessary for you to walk through the crowd and even where the family is gathered.
6. Pay special attention to the children. Children have a difficult time at funerals because their way of expressing grief is through play, so they are often a bit confused, and their parents are worried about them. Seek out the children with your dog, and it always eases a burden.
7. It is not necessary to engage in conversation, most of the time people do not really feel like talking. They don't know what to say. The best thing to do is look them in the eye, give them a kind smile and maybe just say I'm sorry. If you feel like they are approachable a soft touch on the arm as you say I'm sorry is often acceptable. Men it is not recommended you do this with the women, but it is acceptable for women to do it. That's just the way the world is.
8. Do not stand off to the side with your dog and wait for people to approach you. Most people will not approach you.
9. Children like to be given something. It could be the dog's business card, a sticker or our plush stuffed C4C dogs if you have one. It gives them something to hold and it takes a lot of pressure off them.
10. This is not the time to hand out informational brochures about the C4C ministry.
11. Do not engage the family in conversation unless they initiate it first. That can be awkward and it's best to just let them lead.
12. Sometimes at a memorial service, chapel or graveside service there will be military honors. This typically involves a 21-gun salute, so be prepared if it is startling to your dog, you may want to go to the car.
13. Do not bring food or drink for yourself or your dog. If you follow the guidelines of two hours' service time, then your dog should be able to go without water. If your dog must have treats to work or be

attentive, small bits of something in your pocket would probably be OK but please give it to them discreetly.

14. A lot of times families will have food and drink at services, and they will invite you to take part. Use your own judgment whether you accept that invitation or not. Both are acceptable.

15. It would also be acceptable for you to sign the registration book that they will have at the service. Put your dog's name as well and you could just put C4C to the side.

If anyone has any questions, comments, suggestions, or concerns please feel free to contact Lisa Stapleton, her number is 210-218-4027 and email: lisa@c21thehills.com