

Real Cost of Direct Cremation in Orange County — Key Findings for Hospice Professionals

From The Opal Care Team

Preliminary Findings — Final Study Coming Soon

Executive Summary

Opal analyzed 55 General Price Lists (GPLs) from licensed cremation providers covering almost 90% of providers in Orange County. We researched and **analyzed every possible fee and surcharge a consumer may incur** when purchasing direct cremation services.

The results confirm what families and hospice teams often experience: **“all-inclusive” direct cremation prices rarely include required fees and surcharges**, leaving families with unexpected costs that can add hundreds of dollars.

Why This Matters

Families making end-of-life decisions are already under emotional strain. When the final bill is **hundreds of dollars higher than the quoted “all-inclusive” price**, the financial shock compounds their stress.

Hospice professionals are often the first—and sometimes only—guides helping families navigate these decisions.

Key Findings

- **Average Listed Price vs. Real Cost:** The average advertised price for direct cremation was **\$1,727**, but when **basic required fees** were added (death certificate, cremation permit, DCA fee, return of ashes), the adjusted average cost rose to **\$1,949**. In some cases, the difference was **\$400** or more.
- **Additional Surcharges:** Transportation, weight surcharges, credit card fees, and pacemaker removal charges **added \$500–\$1,000+** in some situations.
- **No Industry Standard for “All-Inclusive”:** Even when providers claim a package is “complete,” essential items are often excluded.
- **Inconsistent Price Lists:** GPL formats and terminology varied widely, making true comparison shopping nearly impossible for families.

Recommendations for Hospice Professionals

1. Prepare Families for “Hidden” Costs:

Explain that most “all-inclusive” prices for direct cremation don’t include required fees like permits, death certificates, or the return of ashes.

2. Ask for the Full GPL:

Encourage families to request an itemized General Price List and check for:

- Death certificate & permit fees
- Transportation (standard + beyond standard distance)
- Weight surcharges & pacemaker removal fees
- Urn & return of ashes

Be aware that GPLs often include inconsistent line items, absent information, and unclear language.

3. Compare Final Adjusted Costs:

Help families use a simple worksheet (like Opal’s free tool) to **calculate the real cost**—not just the advertised base price.

4. Watch for “Too Low to Be True” Packages:

Direct cremation packages under \$1,000 often exclude necessary items, creating large surprises later.

Hospice Impact

By helping families ask the right questions early, hospice teams can reduce stress, prevent financial surprises, and empower families to make informed decisions during a difficult time.

Resources

- **Access Our Full Study (Preliminary) Here → [The Real Cost of Direct Cremation in Orange County | 2025](#)**
- **Access the Free Direct Cremation Pricing Worksheet → [here](#)**

