

GUARDING THE LEGACY

A Digital Safety Guide for Independent Funeral Homes

Protecting Grieving Families From Online Scams

From the team at Afterglow - TheUpperRoomCare.com

As an independent funeral director, your reputation in your community is built entirely on trust. This guide exists to help you protect that trust - and the families you serve - from a growing wave of digital scams specifically targeting the grieving.

PART ONE

The Threat Landscape

As an independent funeral director, your calling is to provide a sanctuary of peace and dignity for grieving families. Today, that sanctuary is being threatened by digital predators.

Because corporate conglomerates maintain large IT departments and dedicated security teams, online scammers increasingly target independent, family-owned homes instead. They exploit the vulnerability of grieving families through sophisticated identity theft and financial fraud.

This guide outlines the two most common digital threats facing independent funeral homes today - and gives you immediate, actionable steps to protect your families and your reputation.

THREAT ONE - THE FACEBOOK LIVESTREAM SCAM

How it works: Scammers search social media for upcoming services. They create fake Facebook pages using your funeral home's name and logo, or the deceased's name. They comment on official posts claiming: 'The service is starting now, click this link to watch live.'

The trap: When family friends click the link, they are prompted to enter credit card details to verify their identity or access the stream.

The damage: Guests are defrauded, and the funeral home receives the blame for allowing scammers near the page.

THREAT TWO - OBITUARY CLONING AND FAKE MEMORIAL FUNDS

How it works: Automated bots scrape text and photographs from a funeral home website's obituary section the moment they are published. They recreate a look-alike memorial page on a rogue website or fake fundraising platform.

The trap: Out-of-town relatives wishing to send flowers or financial support are redirected to these fraudulent platforms.

The damage: Funds intended for the grieving family are stolen, disrupting the estate and causing additional emotional distress at the worst possible time.

Why independent homes specifically: Scammers have learned that independent funeral homes typically lack the dedicated IT security resources of large corporate chains, making them, unfairly, an easier target. This guide exists to close that gap.

The 4-Step Digital Shield Checklist

Run your funeral home's digital presence through these four checkpoints today to lock down your brand and protect the families who trust you.



Checkpoint 1: The Pinned Post Prevention

Pin a permanent warning to the top of your official Facebook business page. *Action:* Post: 'We will NEVER ask for a credit card to view a live stream or read an obituary. If you receive a message or comment asking for money, it is a scam. Please report it immediately.'



Checkpoint 2: Comment Moderation Filters

Block scammers from posting fake links in your Facebook comments automatically. *Action:* Go to Page Settings then Moderation. Add these keywords to your blocked list: 'live stream', 'watch live', 'link', 'click here', 'stream'. Facebook will hide any comment containing these words before the public sees it.



Checkpoint 3: Google Alert Monitoring

Know the moment a fake website uses your home's name or a client's name. *Action:* Set up a free Google Alert for your funeral home's exact name in quotation marks. You will receive an email immediately if a rogue website appears using your name.



Checkpoint 4: Standardize Your Streaming

If you offer live streaming, ensure it happens inside your secure website or through one dedicated platform requiring no passwords or cards. Never leave streaming details ambiguous to the public.

Time required: All four checkpoints can be completed in under 30 minutes - most of it is simply pinning one post and adding five blocked keywords. A small investment of time for meaningful protection of the families who trust you.

PART THREE

The Family Handout

Director's note: this page is designed to be printed and included in your physical arrangement folders, or emailed to the primary point of contact, as a value-add that shows families you are looking out for them during a vulnerable time.

FAMILY ADVISORY

While you focus on honoring your loved one, our staff is working diligently to protect your family's privacy and digital security. Unfortunately, digital scammers frequently scan public notices to target grieving families.

Please review these three simple steps to keep your family and friends safe online.

1. BEWARE OF PHISHING COMMENTS AND MESSAGES

If you or your friends post about the upcoming service on social media, scammers may comment using fake profiles, offering a link to a live stream of the service.

The rule: [FUNERAL HOME NAME] will never charge a fee or ask for a credit card to watch a service. Do not click these links.

2. GUARD PERSONAL DETAILS IN PUBLIC TRIBUTES

When drafting the obituary or sharing memories online, try to avoid publishing highly specific identifiers that identity thieves use, such as the exact birth date or mother's maiden name of the deceased, or the home addresses of surviving family members (this alerts burglars when the home will be empty during funeral hours).

3. VERIFY ALL MEMORIAL FUNDS DIRECTLY

If you decide to set up a digital memorial fund or charity donation page, please provide the link directly to our funeral director. We will place the official, verified link directly onto our secure website obituary page so your donors know exactly where their generosity is going.

If you ever receive a suspicious phone call, text, or email claiming to be from our staff asking for immediate financial updates, please hang up and call our main office line directly at [PHONE NUMBER].

Beyond Protection - The Aftercare Gap

Protecting families from digital scammers is one form of trust. There is another form of trust that independent funeral homes often struggle to maintain - not because of bad actors, but simply because there are not enough hours in the day.

What happens to a family's relationship with your funeral home after the service ends?

For most independent homes, the honest answer is: very little. Not because directors do not care, but because following up with every family, at every meaningful interval, over months and years, is simply not possible alongside the daily demands of the work.

The data is clear: Families who receive thoughtful, ongoing aftercare communication are significantly more likely to return for pre-need planning, to recommend the home to neighbours and family, and to remain loyal even when approached by large corporate chains offering aggressive marketing.

Large chains already automate this. Independent homes, for the most part, do not.

Afterglow was built specifically to close this gap for independent funeral homes. It automatically sends 7 dignified aftercare messages over 13 months - Day 3, 2 Weeks, 1 Month, 3 Months, 6 Months, 1 Year, and 13 Months - all under your funeral home's own name. You add a family once, on the day of service. The system handles the rest.

\$49 per month. Unlimited families. No setup fees. No long-term contract. Cancel any time.

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