



DESIGN & DIGNITY

Guidelines for Hospital Emergency
Departments Bereavement Suites



**Excerpt from the Design & Dignity Stylebook
July 2014**



Bereavement suites in Emergency Departments (including viewing areas)

Design & Dignity Guidelines for Bereavement Suites in Emergency Departments

These guidelines were developed by the Irish Hospice Foundation and have been adopted by the HSE for all new hospital building and refurbishment projects.



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

End-of-life Care Activity in Emergency Departments

The majority of deaths in Ireland occur in acute hospitals at 43%. Of these, 12% occur in emergency departments.

Purpose of Bereavement Suites within Emergency Departments

Bereavement suites within emergency departments need to be designed with dignity to create a respectful, protective, quiet, non-clinical environment for families at what can be an extremely traumatic time.

The bereavement suite is comprised of a viewing area, where a deceased person's body is laid out and an adjoining family room where news can be sensitively broken in private. Once the family feel prepared to see their deceased relative, a partition can be gently folded back to allow them to enter the viewing area.

Aesthetic, Physical and Sensory Environment

- The aim of the bereavement suite is to create a respectful, quiet and non-clinical environment
- The suite should be constructed to exclude external noise as far as possible
- Finishes should be carefully chosen to soften the acoustic of the suite
- The temperature in the viewing area should be room temperature
- Ventilation should be carefully considered. Ideally natural ventilation should be available via openable windows



Guidelines for Emergency Department Bereavement Suites



Bereavement Suites

- In every emergency department, there should be at least one family room with an adjoining viewing room.
- Large acute hospitals should have two bereavement suites to accommodate two deceased patients and their families at the one time.
- The suites should be accessible for people with physical and cognitive impairments
- The rooms should have a strong sense of privacy and not be overlooked from other parts of the hospital.
- The family room should provide comfortable seating areas for a family group.
- The viewing area should provide adequate space for the bed/trolley and a family group to gather
- Where multiple family and viewing rooms are provided each could have a distinct aesthetic identity.
- Refreshment facilities including tea, coffee and water should be provided in the family room
- The bereavement suite should be designed to facilitate individual cultural, spiritual and religious wishes
- If paediatric deaths a range of bed sizes / cots should be available but locked away

Location

- The location of the bereavement suites should avoid crossing clinical or highly trafficked areas.
- Ideally, visitors to the bereavement suites should not need to return through the reception area.
- Ideally, the suite should have access to natural light and have views onto a private courtyard or garden area

Guidelines for Emergency Department Bereavement Suites

Signage

- It is not necessary to have the emergency department's bereavement suites signposted from the public entrance of the department, however all staff should be aware of its location. At all times families should be accompanied to the bereavement suite by a member of staff.
- Suitable vacant/ engaged signage should be used on the doors to the rooms. See sample sign below. Guidelines on the appropriate use of the Hospice Friendly Hospital's end-of-life symbol must be followed. See Appendix 4 for guidelines

This sign can be fixed to the door of a room. The cover can slide across to reveal the end of life symbol. This symbol is displayed when a patient has died and after the family have been notified.

Details on how to purchase such a sign are available at: <http://hospicefoundation.ie/what-we-do/hospice-friendly-hospitals/resources/>



Furniture and Finishes

- Furniture and finishes should be of high quality
- While all finishes are required to comply with infection control criteria they should be carefully chosen to appear to warm and non-clinical
- Seating should be soft, comfortable, durable and age-friendly
- Tables and other furniture should be of natural materials such as wood. Glass should be avoided
- Accent features such as individual art works, stained glass windows and decorative wall textiles should be considered
- Colour choices need to be carefully chosen. Ideally muted, warm, natural colours should be considered
- Natural effect flooring finishes should be considered



Guidelines for Emergency Department Bereavement Suites

Lighting

- The lighting should help to create a calm and soothing atmosphere
- Adjustable top lighting should be considered in the viewing room to provide a soft focus on the deceased person's body.
- Strong side lighting should be avoided, particularly in the viewing room as such lighting can create shadows across the deceased person's body
- Lighting should be controllable from within the room. High quality fixtures, such as stainless steel light switches, should be considered

Doors

- Doors and ironmongery should be of high quality
- Glass vision panels in doors, if required, should be fitted with controllable blinds or privacy glass.
- A separate access to the viewing area should be provided for staff.

Windows

- Windows should be openable.
- Windows should not overlook public areas.
- Windows should not create to a feeling of exposure for visitors.

Artwork

- Artwork can have a calming and stress reducing affect if correctly chosen
- An evidence based approach to artwork selection should be followed
- Nature art such as serene nature scenes and landscapes, photography, glass art and sculpture should be considered.
- Abstract, surreal or ambiguous art should be avoided.



Room Names

- Careful consideration should be given to the naming of the rooms
- Staff and patient/family representatives should be consulted
- Names with religious connotations should be avoided
- Terms such as BID ('brought in dead') should avoided at all times
- Terms such as bereavement suites are preferable to viewing room

Appendix: Emergency Department Bereavement Suites Assessment Tool

This tool is designed to assist hospitals to assess the standard of bereavement suites in line with the Design & Dignity Guidelines. **These Guidelines have been adopted by the HSE for all new building and refurbishment projects.**

Name of Hospital	
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Design & Dignity Criteria	Weighted score	Assessment score	Comments
There is a bereavement suite available.	3		
The bereavement suite is located within the emergency department.	1		
The bereavement suite avoids crossing clinical or highly trafficked areas.	1		
Visitors to the bereavement suite do not have to return through the reception area.	1		
Suitable vacant/engaged signage is used at the door to the room.	1		
The bereavement suite maintains privacy.	1		
The bereavement suite is accessible for people with physical & cognitive impairment	1		
The bereavement suite comprises of a viewing area where the deceased person's body is laid out and adjoining family room.	3		
The bereavement suite and adjoining family room are separated by a folding partition.	2		
The bereavement suite provides adequate space for a family group to gather.	1		
The bereavement suite excludes external noise as far as possible.	1		
The temperature in the bereavement suite can be maintained at room temperature.	1		
The bereavement suite has access to natural light.	1		
Natural ventilation can be accessed via opening windows.	1		
The bereavement suite can facilitate individual cultural, spiritual and religious wishes	1		

Design & Dignity Criteria	Weighted score	Assessment score	Comments
makes it a respectful, protective and a non-clinical environment.			
The bereavement suite contains high quality furniture in good condition.	2		
The bereavement suite contains suitable art-work which enhances the environment.	2		
High quality lighting fixtures are controllable particularly for the area over the deceased person's body	1		
The bereavement suite and has access to a toilet.	1		
Refreshment facilities including tea, coffee and water can be provided for in the adjoining family room	1		
Bereavement suite supporting for paediatric deaths have a range of bed sizes/cots available.	1 (n/a)		
Extra paediatric beds / cots can be stored and locked out of sight of families and visitors	1 (n/a)		

Summary of assessment	
Overall Score (out of 30)	
Paediatric score (out of 32)	
Summary of shortfalls	





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