



DESIGN & DIGNITY

Guidelines for Public Spaces in Mortuaries



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



Public Spaces in Mortuaries

Design & Dignity Guidelines for Public Spaces in Mortuaries

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

General

The mortuary is a sanctuary and must convey a sense of reverence and respect for life, death and bereavement. The public areas within the building should evoke a serene and reassuring atmosphere.

There should be visual, auditory and olfactory segregation of:

- The mortuary from patient areas of the hospital
- The areas within the mortuary used by the public and the operational areas

The route from all wards within the hospital to the mortuary should be covered and a respectful passage should be assured for the bodies of the deceased and their relatives.

Way finding and Signage

Visible and easy to understand way finding signs should be in place to reduce additional stress and anxiety for families travelling to the mortuary. An external sign should also be at the entrance to the mortuary.



Arrival and Waiting Areas

Both an outer entrance area with protection from the weather, and an inner reception area should be provided.

At least one waiting room is required. Two rooms or a room that can be subdivided will provide facilities for more than one family at any time or an extended family that does not wish to be together.

Refreshment facilities will be required in the waiting room(s) and sanitary facilities should be provided close to the waiting and viewing rooms.

Guidelines for Mortuaries

Viewing Rooms

There needs to be at least one viewing room, but depending on the incidence of deaths occurring at the hospital, the mortuary may need more than one facility for viewing a deceased person. Viewing rooms should have access to natural light and also have adjustable lighting over the areas where the deceased person is laid out. Viewing rooms should be adaptable to meet the needs of different faiths and cultures, and if paediatric deaths are expected, facilitate viewing the body of a deceased child.

Suitable furniture should be provided so that bereaved relatives or spiritual advisors staying overnight with the body of the deceased are comfortable.

Each viewing room requires hand washing facilities/hand sanitizers and a means for people to indicate to staff when they wish to leave. The doors to the viewing rooms need to be of a height and width to allow a coffin to be carried through.

The viewing rooms should have direct access to an enclosed garden area with an exit from the mortuary area directly from the garden.

Multi-Faith Removal Room

A multi-faith /non-faith room is required for ceremonies within the mortuary building. Design should take account of the varying numbers of people that could congregate within this room.

Meeting Rooms

A meeting room is needed where staff and other agencies, such as the Garda Síochána, can meet relatives or others and also where retained organs can be returned to bereaved families.

Storage Area

A lockable facility, accessible to the removal room and the viewing rooms, should be provided for the storage of religious symbols from different faiths, when not in use.

A storage area for items required within the public area of the mortuary, such as extra furniture, is also necessary.

Preparatory and Holding Rooms

There should be a facility for ritual washing of bodies and an area for relatives who wish to personally prepare the body of the deceased prior to viewing. The provision of a preparatory room between the operational area and the viewing room(s) will facilitate this.

To facilitate the viewing of a body where public contact is denied, normally because of forensic investigation, there should be a glass partition between the viewing room and the room where the body is held.

Information for families

There should be a leaflet holder containing up-to-date information for families on bereavement, practical advice, resources and local services available

Exit Areas

The design should incorporate an inner exit area and an outer exit area with protection from the weather.

Garden

The mortuary should have an adjacent garden area with direct access from the waiting room, viewing rooms, and providing a direct exit from the mortuary area. The garden should be enclosed and have a range of walking and sitting areas.

Car Parking

There should be sufficient area around the mortuary to allow adequate parking for groups using the facility.

Designated parking spaces, close to the exits, are required for a hearse and the cars of the immediate family.

The layout of the vehicular access and egress routes and parking areas should be designed to prevent congestion between arriving and departing parties.

Appendix: Public Spaces in Mortuaries Assessment Tool

This tool is designed to assist hospitals to assess the standard of public spaces in mortuaries 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
The mortuary is a sanctuary & conveys a sense of reverence and respect for life, death and bereavement	3		
The route(s) from the hospital to the mortuary is covered and respectable for transferring deceased patients and/or accompanying families to the mortuary	2		
The mortuary is clearly and visibly signposted	1		
An outer entrance area with a weather protector is provided	1		
There is an inner reception area for families	2		
The mortuary has at least one waiting room but can provide facilities for more than one family	2		
Refreshment facilities are available in the waiting room(s)	2		
The mortuary has sanitary facilities close to the waiting and viewing rooms	2		
The viewing room(s) has access to natural light	3		
The viewing room(s) has adjustable lighting over the area where the deceased person is laid out	2		
The doors to the viewing room are high and wide enough to allow a coffin to be carried through	1		
If paediatric deaths are expected, the viewing room should facilitate viewing the body of a deceased child	N/A		
The mortuary provides suitable, high quality furniture in good condition	3		
The viewing room is adaptable for different religions and cultures	3		
A meeting room is available for families to meet staff, Gardaí etc in privacy	3		

Design & Dignity Criteria	Weighted score	Assessment score	Comments
The mortuary is a sanctuary & conveys a sense of reverence and respect for life, death and bereavement	1		
There is a storage area for items required in the public area of the mortuary such as extra furniture	1		
A facility for ritual washing of bodies is available	1		
The mortuary has an area available for relatives who wish to personally prepare the body of the deceased prior to viewing	1		
Mortuary has an enclosed garden with direct access from the waiting and viewing rooms	3		
There is a leaflet holder containing up-to-date information for families on bereavement, practical advice, resources and local services available	2		
There is adequate car parking close to the mortuary	2		
There are designated parking spaces, close to the exit, required for the hearse and the cars of the immediate family	2		
Mortuaries vehicular area is designed to prevent any congestion between arriving and departing parties	1		

Summary of assessment	
Overall Score (out of 45)	
Paediatric score (out of 43)	
Summary of shortfalls	



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