



Iowa Funeral Directors Association

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IFDA Blueprint Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) December 14, 2017

What is the IFDA Blueprint for the Future?

The initial meetings for IFDA's Strategic Plan, also known as the IFDA Blueprint for the Future were held on **June 24 & 25, 2015**. It was developed to provide the necessary resources for funeral directors to be the cultural authority of the deathcare industry by advancing the funeral profession through advocacy, education, ethical standards, and business resources.

To that end, there are seven stated goals:

- We commit to funeral directors being the proven deathcare experts
- We commit to high ethical standards
- We commit to being the united voice for funeral professionals
- We commit to being the premier provider of continuing education that fosters professionalism
- We commit to offer resources that give an advantage to members
- We commit to staying relevant to funeral professionals
- We commit to being a nationally-recognized, model funeral service association that delivers excellence in leadership and resource management

Under each goal are action statements. The entire five-page Blueprint for the Future can be found on the homepage of the IFDA website at www.iafda.org.

Who was involved with the development of the IFDA Blueprint for the Future?

The group included members representing a cross-section of funeral homes – large/small, rural/urban – and included IFDA Board members, FSI Board members, and past presidents. They are listed below and ***those who actually attended have an ** following their name.***

From that group there were work groups developed that came up with the final IFDA Blueprint for the Future as presented to the IFDA Board of Governors and the Funeral Services (FSI) of Iowa Board of Directors.

Those invited to be part of the initial meetings for IFDA's Strategic Planning in June 2015:

- William Armstrong – Armstrong Funeral Home, Mount Ayr**
- Representative Rob Bacon – Rasmusson-Bacon Funeral Home, Nevada**
- Joe Bates – Bates Funeral Chapel, Oskaloosa
- Marty Beenblossom – Jones Eden Funeral Home, Washington
- Ben Eldridge – Eldridge Family Funeral Homes, Paullina**
- Paul Fouts – Fouts Funeral Home, Woodbine**
- David Fry – Fry Funeral Home, Tipton**
- James Fullerton – Fullerton Family Funeral Home, Mason City**
- Justin Hillman – Van Dyk Duvon Funeral Home, Pella**
- Michael Jones – Pauley Jones Funeral Home, Harlan

Continued

Who was involved with the development of the IFDA Blueprint for the Future? (continued)

- Andy Joyce – Joyce Funeral Home, Emmetsburg**
- John Kloster - Kloster Funeral Home, Marengo**
- Bob Kraus – DeJong Greaves Funeral Home, Keokuk**
- Jayme Lentz – Lentz Funeral Home, Algona**
- Pat Leonard – Leonard Funeral Home, Dubuque**
- Vaughn Livingston – Hackett-Livingston Funeral Home, Shenandoah**
- Lia Modde – Hamilton’s Funeral Home, Des Moines**
- Marty Rieken – Rieken Funeral Home, Oakland**
- Brad Smith – Sliefert Funeral Home, Storm Lake**
- Ryan Tucker – Kaiser-Corson Funeral Home, Denver**
- Richard Wagler – Wagler Funeral Home, Bloomfield**
- Charlie Yoder – Yoder-Powell Funeral Home, Kalona**

When did the IFDA Board adopt the Blueprint for the Future?

The IFDA Board of Governors voted unanimously on **September 24, 2015**, to adopt the IFDA Blueprint for the Future. Those Board members in attendance were: Marty Rieken, Pat Leonard, David Fry, Lynn Ochiltree, Ryan Tucker, John Kloster, Charlie Yoder, Bill Armstrong, Paul Fouts, and James Fullerton.

On September 23, 2015, the FSI Board of Directors voted unanimously to adopt the Blueprint for the Future. Those FSI Board members in attendance were: Brad Smith, Bob Kraus, Vaughn Livingston, Ric Porter, Richard Wagler, Craig Kramer, Mark Kimzey and Suzanne Gebel.

Why am I hearing about the IFDA Blueprint for the Future again now?

IFDA first published the entire IFDA Blueprint for the Future in the November/December 2015 issue of the *IFDA Communique*.

In 2015-2016, IFDA President Marty Rieken adopted the IFDA Blueprint for the Future as his theme for the year and parts of the Blueprint were featured in the *IFDA Communique*, as well as several issues of the *IFDA Insider*, and presented at district meetings, as well as the 2016 Convention.

The following year (2016-2017), IFDA President Pat Leonard’s theme was “Reclaiming our Cultural Authority” (a central theme in the Blueprint) and his columns in the magazine, many articles in the *IFDA Insider*, district meetings and sessions at last year’s Convention featured these themes.

We bring the issue to your attention again now to ensure your continued awareness and support of the IFDA Blueprint for the Future. In addition, the IFDA Board of Governors has directed staff to develop a survey of the membership for them to review prior to its release during their February Board Meeting.

I’m already licensed. How will this impact me?

This potential change would not impact current licensees. Everyone in all discussions have agreed that current licensees would be “grandfathered in” if the requirements change in the future.

Did IFDA request a change from the Board of Mortuary Science to the rules governing the licensing of funeral directors in the State of Iowa?

No. IFDA is grateful for many years of open communication with the Iowa Board of Mortuary Science members and their staff. To that end, IFDA was on the agenda of the December 1, 2016, Board of Mortuary Science meeting to present the IFDA Blueprint for the Future. Unfortunately, there was not a quorum of BMS members at that meeting, so IFDA went forward with the presentation to those BMS members who were present. IFDA has been providing updates on all meetings and discussions quarterly to the Board of Mortuary Science’s Educational Requirements Subcommittee meetings – the day before each scheduled Board of Mortuary Science meeting.

Explain to me today's requirements for licensure in Iowa.

In order to apply for licensure as a funeral director under Iowa law, a prospective licensee must have completed all of the following educational requirements:

- A minimum of 60 hours of college credit as indicated on the transcript from a regionally-accredited college or university with a minimum of a 2.0 or "C" grade point average. The 60 college semester hours shall not include any technical mortuary science course; and
- A program in mortuary science from a school accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service education (typically 45 hours); and
- A college course of at least one semester hour or equivalent in current Iowa laws and rules covering mortuary science content areas including, but not limited to Iowa law and rules governing the practice of mortuary science, cremation, vital statistics, cemeteries and preneed services.

We were told that IFDA won't compromise on the four-year degree requirement. Why not?

This statement again is not true. There continues to be quite a bit of compromise as we explore possibilities for addressing educational requirements for the first time since 1955. The initial thought was a four year degree and then mortuary school, but after more research we were able to see that Iowa's current requirements are **very close** to a Bachelor's Degree already.

How so?

A bachelors' degree is generally four years or 120 semester hours of credit.

Student at DMACC Mortuary Science Program

AAS Degree that precedes admission to DMACC Mortuary Science Program – 64 hours

DMACC Mortuary Science Program – 46 hours

Total hours required prior to internship = 110 hours

Student at Another Accredited Mortuary Science Program AA Degree that precedes admission to an Accredited Mortuary Science Program – 60 hours

Accredited Mortuary Science Program – 45 hours (average according to ABFSE)

Total hours required prior to internship = 105 hours

We propose that college credit be given for the year-long internship (8 hours - estimate). ***If this occurs, current requirements are only two to seven hours short of a bachelors' degree.*** Thus, the proposed four year degree requirement is a negligible change in actual credit hours.

We have encouraged any of the three Board of Regents universities to explore the opportunity to confer a bachelor's degree with a concentration in mortuary science, in conjunction with an accredited mortuary school.

Why does IFDA feel we should pursue this change now?

Iowa funeral directors were first required in 1929 to have a certain level of education - completion of 8th grade - as a condition of licensure. In 1935, the Legislature increased that to "completed an accredited high school course". The Legislature again increased that to "two academic years of instruction in a recognized college, junior college or university", effective September 1, 1955, but only for "prospective licensees". The Legislature has not updated the educational requirements for funeral directors since SF 54 was sent to Governor William Beardsley on March 19, 1953.

The demands on our profession have changed since 1955 thanks to additional requirements of the Federal Trade Commission, OSHA, oversight on preneed. Additionally, funeral directors are exposed to nearly every new additional public health pressure that appears every year from all over the globe. With every new public health threat such as Ebola or fentanyl in the past few years, to Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease earlier this decade, to HIV and AIDS in the 1980s, funeral directors need to know more to better protect themselves, their employees and the public.

The educational requirements built for 1955 are no longer appropriate or strong enough for our profession six decades later.

Does IFDA maintain that a licensed funeral director in Iowa without a Bachelor's Degree is not a professional?

Absolutely not! At no point in time did any IFDA Board Member, Officer, or any of the IFDA staff (past or present) ever state nor would they ever say – or even think – that a funeral director without a Bachelor's Degree is not a professional. That statement is a blatant mischaracterization of the position of IFDA Officers, the IFDA Board members, and the IFDA staff.

IFDA's officers and board are proud that Iowa's funeral directors are held in the highest regard across the country due to Iowa's educational requirements and internship, in addition to the state's commitment to continuing education for funeral directors.

Is IFDA mandating a change to the DMACC program?

No. After adopting the Blueprint for the Future, IFDA officers met with DMACC Mortuary Science Chair, Dr. Kevin Patterson, to begin working together on IFDA's goals

Can a BA degree be obtained anywhere in Iowa now for Mortuary Science?

Yes. There is a program at Upper Iowa University (UIU). From the UIU website: "Students complete 90 credits, including the general education requirements and the 26 credits in science and psychology that make up the major, at Upper Iowa, first. They are awarded a Bachelor's degree in Mortuary Science upon completion of the requirements for a diploma from an accredited school of mortuary science which has an articulation agreement with UIU."

We can't find good help now. Won't the four year degree requirement make it more difficult?

Virtually every state in the country, including Colorado – where neither education nor a license is required to be a funeral director – reports that they have a workforce shortage.

Research proves that educational requirements are not a barrier to individuals entering the funeral profession. "Funeral Service Education and Wage Data" is posted on the IFDA website at www.iafda.org. ***In addition, the four year degree requirement is only another two to seven credit hours, so it is not an onerous burden on students.***

I've heard Minnesota is doing away with their four-year degree requirement? What about Ohio? Is Michigan changing their requirements?

Minnesota's Funeral Directors Association has a Workforce Taskforce looking at their workforce issues. There is no consideration of doing away with the requirement of a four-year degree prior to licensure in Minnesota. In fact, IFDA was told by officials in Minnesota that it would be virtually impossible to do away with the four year degree requirement for licensure in Minnesota.

Ohio officials tell IFDA that despite their workforce issues, they do not believe the four year degree is a deterrent as there are ample students graduating from mortuary college and that the shortage is more related to retention.

The Michigan Funeral Directors Association has drafted legislation to be introduced in 2018 in the Michigan Legislature that would require a bachelor's degree for initial mortuary science licensure.

What else does that Board have planned?

Iowa – like every other state in the country (no matter their requirements for licensure) – is experiencing a workforce shortage, especially in the rural areas. As part of the Blueprint for the Future, the Board will consider establishing a Workforce Ad Hoc Committee at their February meeting to address those issues.

I have other concerns not addressed here. Who can I contact?

The IFDA Officers and Board of Governors are interested in your input. Please contact any of the following:

- IFDA Acting President - Bill Armstrong – bill@armstrongfh.com
- IFDA Acting President-Elect – Charlie Yoder – yodercharlie@gmail.com
- IFDA Acting Secretary Treasurer – Pat Leonard – pleonardfd@gmail.com
- District 1 Governor – Ryan Tucker – tuckerfd@hotmail.com
- District 2 Governor – Jacob Wittrock – Jacob@stewartbaxter.com
- District 3 Governor – Marcus Vigen – mlvigen@live.com
- District 5 Governor – Paul Fouts – pafouts@windstream.net
- District 6 Governor – Justin Rasmusson – rasmussonfh@gmail.com
- District 7 Governor – Andy Joyce – joycefh@iowatelecom.net

