

# Scammers target loved ones of COVID-19 victims

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Government imposters may have hit a new low with a scheme that targets the grieving survivors of people who died of COVID-19 by offering them help paying for their loved one's funeral expenses.

A real government relief program will pay up to \$9,000 for funeral expenses that people have paid since January 20, 2020 for loved ones who died of COVID-19. Survivors can apply for benefits by contacting the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at **844-684-6333**. The number is toll-free and multi-lingual services are available.

The program is open to American citizens, nationals of U.S. territories, and non-citizens legally admitted to the United States, regardless of income. If you apply, you'll need to show documents including receipts for your expenses and a death certificate that says the death happened in the United States or its territories and was likely caused by COVID-19.

The program just began yesterday, but even before it started, FEMA said it had reports of scammers contacting people and "offering" to register them for assistance.

Here's what you need to know:

- **FEMA will not contact you until you have called FEMA or have applied for assistance.** Anyone who contacts you out of the blue and claims to be a federal employee or from FEMA is a scammer.
- **The government won't ask you to pay anything to get this financial help.** Anyone who does is a scammer.
- **The government won't call, text, email, or contact you on social media and ask for your Social Security, bank account, or credit card number.** Anyone who does is a scammer.
- **Don't give your own or your deceased loved one's personal or financial information to anyone who contacts you out of the blue.** Anyone who does that and asks for that information is a scammer.

FEMA's [Funeral Assistance FAQs](#) have information about the documents you need to apply for funeral expenses. The FAQs also tell you what to do if the death certificate didn't identify COVID-19 as the likely cause of death, as sometimes happened early in the pandemic.

If you doubt a caller claiming to be from FEMA is telling the truth, hang up and report it to the FEMA Helpline at **800-621-3362** or the **National Center for Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721**. Tell us too, at [ReportFraud.fic.gov](https://www.fic.gov/report-fraud).