

144C.5 Final disposition of remains — right to control.

1. Except as provided in [subsection 4](#), the right to control final disposition of a decedent's remains or to make arrangements for the ceremony after a decedent's death vests in and devolves upon the following persons who are competent adults at the time of the decedent's death, in the following order:

- a. A designee, or alternate designee, acting pursuant to the decedent's declaration.
- b. The surviving spouse of the decedent, if not legally separated from the decedent, whose whereabouts is reasonably ascertainable.
- c. A surviving child of the decedent, or, if there is more than one, a majority of the surviving children whose whereabouts are reasonably ascertainable.
- d. The surviving parents of the decedent whose whereabouts are reasonably ascertainable.
- e. A surviving grandchild of the decedent, or, if there is more than one, a majority of the surviving grandchildren whose whereabouts are reasonably ascertainable.
- f. A surviving sibling of the decedent, or, if there is more than one, a majority of the surviving siblings whose whereabouts are reasonably ascertainable.
- g. A surviving grandparent of the decedent, or, if there is more than one, a majority of the surviving grandparents whose whereabouts are reasonably ascertainable.
- h. A person in the next degree of kinship to the decedent in the order named by law to inherit the estate of the decedent under the rules of inheritance for intestate succession or, if there is more than one, a majority of such surviving persons whose whereabouts are reasonably ascertainable.
- i. A person who represents that the person knows the identity of the decedent and who signs an affidavit warranting the identity of the decedent and assuming the right to control final disposition of the decedent's remains and the responsibility to pay any expense attendant to such final disposition. A person who warrants the identity of the decedent pursuant to this paragraph is liable for all damages that result, directly or indirectly, from that warrant.
- j. The county medical examiner, if responsible for the decedent's remains.

2. A third party may rely upon the directives of a person who represents that the person is a member of a class of persons described in [subsection 1](#), paragraph "c", "e", "f", "g", or "h", and who signs an affidavit stating that all other members of the class, whose whereabouts are reasonably ascertainable, have been notified of the decedent's death and the person has received the assent of a majority of those members of that class of persons to control final disposition of the decedent's remains and to make arrangements for the performance of a ceremony for the decedent.

3. A third party may await a court order before proceeding with final disposition of a decedent's remains or arrangements for the performance of a ceremony for a decedent if the third party is aware of a dispute among persons who are members of the same class of persons described in [subsection 1](#), or of a dispute between persons who are authorized under [subsection 1](#) and the executor named in a decedent's will or a personal representative appointed by the court.

4. The right to control final disposition of a decedent's remains or to make arrangements for the ceremony after a decedent's death shall not vest in or devolve upon a person who is prohibited from acting as a designee pursuant to [section 144C.8](#).

2008 Acts, ch 1051, §10, 22; 2025 Acts, ch 22, §1, 2

Referred to in §142.1, 144.27, 144.34, 144.56, 144C.2, 144C.8, 331.802, 331.804, 331.805, 5231.309

Subsection 1, paragraph a, applies only to a designee or alternate designee designated in a declaration that is executed on or after July 1, 2008; 2008 Acts, ch 1051, §22

Subsection 1, unnumbered paragraph 1 amended

NEW subsection 4