



Respecting Your Embryos At All Times

“One of the challenges of any adoption is navigating times of uncertainty. With embryo adoption, one of those times occurs when adopted embryos are thawed for transfer. Sometimes not all of the embryos will survive the thawing procedure.

Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter provides dignified, compassionate burial for embryos. We immediately knew that we would want to work with them, in the event that any of our embryos did not survive. We were impressed by their respect for life, and their loving care of each embryo.”

Embryo Adopting Couple

Through Sacred Heart Guardians you have the option of dignifying your embryos that do not survive thawing with burial, rather than disposed of as medical waste. Burial is an act of love which honors your embryos and your commitment to them through adoption.

■ **Before your frozen embryo transfer,** ask your fertility clinic to send any embryos that do not survive to Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter for burial.

■ Burials take place quarterly at a Catholic cemetery located in Minnesota. SHG serves people of all faiths.

■ After the burial, documentation is mailed to you or to your clinic as you direct (see reverse)

■ We serve the youngest human beings and their families. There are no fees charged for our services.



Sacred Heart Guardians & Shelter

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Instructions: Complete and give to your IVF clinic.

I/we authorize _____ (Clinic) and its ART lab to send any deceased embryo(s) resulting from my/our IVF or FET procedure(s) to Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter (SHG) for burial.

☐ Yes, Clinic may provide SHG with our contact information.*

☐ No, Clinic may not provide SHG with our contact information.

Name(s): _____

Signature: _____ . Date: _____

Signature: _____ . Date: _____

**SHG uses this information only for the purpose of mailing burial-related documentation to the patient(s). Otherwise, patient(s) may retrieve this information from their clinic.*

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why burial?

An embryo (also known as: fertilized egg, pre-embryo, zygote, blastocyst, tissue, specimen) is a living human being in his or her earliest stage of development. If it dies (i.e., "arrests," "is non-viable," "is discarded"), burial is an appropriate and respectful way to handle the remains.

2. Which embryos can be buried?

SHG facilitates burial for any embryo that dies in the ART (i.e., IVF) lab during a fresh or frozen cycle. Cause of death may include:

- Spontaneous arrest anytime after fertilization.
- Discard per lab grade or genetic testing result.
- Failure to survive freeze or thaw.
- Cryopreservation equipment failure.
- Patient-elected thaw without transfer.



If you have frozen embryos you do not intend to transfer, note that burial is *not* a "disposition option" (i.e., donate to research, donate to another person, thaw and discard). Rather, burial is a respectful way to care for embryos after they have died, as an alternative to the routine lab practice of waste disposal.

3. More about the burial....

Deceased embryos can be sent to SHG at any time, from IVF labs or patients located anywhere in the United States. SHG burials take place near St. Paul, MN in February, May, August, and November. All embryos buried on a particular date share a common burial container and no names are used. A grave marker is inscribed with the burial date and a short passage. Details of the burial, including gravesite ID number, are mailed to the clinic or patient, as indicated above.