

CHAPTER 17

17 IN THIS VOLUME

The Quiet After.

RECEPTION COORDINATOR

The reception is the event's exhale — the gathering after the graveside where the family, the agency, and the visiting mourners share a meal and begin moving from ceremony back into life.

It is often the first time the family has eaten all day, the first time command staff has sat down, and the first time visiting officers meet each other face-to-face in something other than formation.

Warmer than formal. The reception is not the service. Soft lighting, comfortable seating, volume low enough to talk. Feed the family first.

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE – FROM AGENCIES WHO HAVE DONE THIS

- 01 **Warmer than formal.** The family has been stoic all day. Soft lighting, comfortable seating, volume low enough to talk.
- 02 **Feed the family first.** Before the doors open to attendees, the family eats. They have not eaten all day.
- 03 **Cap the receiving line.** Forty-five minutes. After that, the family retreats to a reserved table.
- 04 **Watch for the family who needs to leave.** Spouse, parents, children — each will hit a wall at a different moment.
- 05 **Feed your staff.** Volunteers, caterers, cleanup crews have been standing for six hours.
- 06 **Thank everyone who stayed.** Department head, clergy, musicians, caterer, venue. Face-to-face, sincerely, by name.
- 07 **Do not rush the ending.** The reception ends when the family is ready to leave.
- 08 **Write the thank-you notes tomorrow, not next month.** Handwritten cards to caterer, venue, every speaker, every coordinator, every volunteer.

MODERN CONSIDERATIONS • 2026

- **Digital guest book.** QR code on every table linking to online memorial; family receives compiled book.
- **Live memorial slideshow.** Family-provided photos on a loop on a large screen.
- **Archive video tribute.** Hosted on the agency's memorial page (password-protected per family wishes).
- **Dietary signage.** Vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, halal, kosher, allergens labeled.
- **Non-alcoholic primary beverage line.** Many attending officers are sober; family wishes may require dry reception.
- **Cybersecurity reminder.** Family reminded to watch for fraud, phishing, and fake donation sites.

TURN THE PAGE FOR THE CHECKLIST →

CHECKLIST 17 • HONORING THE FALLEN

Reception Coordinator checklist.

A working one-page reference. Begin at first assignment; complete through service close.

PRE-DAY

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| ☐ Confirm venue, date, time with Funeral Coordinator and family. | ☐ Confirm scope (family-only / agency / public). |
| ☐ Confirm menu and dietary accommodations. | ☐ Confirm staffing (volunteers, paid, caterer). |
| ☐ Confirm parking plan. | ☐ Confirm photograph and flower displays. |
| ☐ Confirm video tribute, sound, and MC. | ☐ Confirm cleanup and venue-return plan. |

LOGISTICS & DISPLAY

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| ☐ Tables and chairs (number and layout). | ☐ Tablecloths, utensils, dishes, beverage containers. |
| ☐ Ice, trash cans, napkins. | ☐ Restrooms (number, locations, supplies). |
| ☐ Photograph display location and coordinator. | ☐ Flower display location and coordinator. |
| ☐ Music coordinator and equipment. | ☐ Video / slide tribute equipment and runtime. |

FAMILY CARE & CLOSE-OUT

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| ☐ Reserved seating for family, pallbearers, dignitaries. | ☐ Receiving line participants and 45-min cap. |
| ☐ Family fed first, before doors open. | ☐ Officer at family table empowered to signal escort. |
| ☐ Cleanup crew assigned; leftover-food disposal plan. | ☐ Donation of leftovers (shelter / hospice / firehouse). |
| ☐ Inventory return of borrowed equipment. | ☐ Thank-you note to venue, caterer, speakers, coordinators within 7 days. |
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