

§ 90-210.124. Authorizing agent.

(a) The following person, in the priority list below, shall have the right to serve as an "authorizing agent":

- (1) An individual at least 18 years of age may authorize the type, place, and method of disposition of the individual's own dead body by methods provided under G.S. 130A-420(a). An individual may delegate his or her right to dispose of his or her own body to any person by one of the methods provided under G.S. 130A-420(a1). When an individual has authorized his or her own cremation and disposition in accordance with this subsection, the individual or institution designated by that individual shall act as the authorizing agent for that individual.
- (2) If a decedent has left no written authorization for the cremation and disposition of the decedent's body as permitted under subdivision (1) of this subsection, the following competent persons in the order listed may authorize the type, method, place, cremation, and disposition of the decedent's body:
 - a. The surviving spouse.
 - b. A majority of the surviving children who are at least 18 years of age and can be located after reasonable efforts.
 - c. The surviving parents.
 - d. A majority of the surviving siblings who are at least 18 years of age and can be located after reasonable efforts.
 - e. A majority of the persons in the classes of the next degrees of kinship, in descending order, who, under State law, would inherit the decedent's estate if the decedent died intestate who are at least 18 years of age and can be located after reasonable efforts.
 - f. A person who has exhibited special care and concern for the decedent and is willing and able to make decisions about the cremation and disposition.
 - g. In the case of indigents or any other individuals whose final disposition is the responsibility of the State or any of its instrumentalities, a public administrator, medical examiner, coroner, State-appointed guardian, or any other public official charged with arranging the final disposition of the decedent may serve as the authorizing agent.
 - h. In the case of individuals who have donated their bodies to science or whose death occurred in a nursing home or private institution and in which the institution is charged with making arrangements for the final disposition of the decedent, a representative of such institution may serve as the authorizing agent in the absence of any of the above.
 - i. In the absence of any of the above, any person willing to assume responsibility as authorizing agent, as specified in this act.

This subsection does not grant to any person the right to cancel a preneed funeral contract executed pursuant to Article 13D of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes or to cause or prohibit the substitution of a preneed licensee as authorized under G.S. 90-210.63 or permit modification of preneed contracts under G.S. 90-210.63A. If a person under this subsection is incompetent at the time of the decedent's death, the person shall be treated as if he or she predeceased the decedent. An attending physician may certify the incompetence of a person and the certification shall apply to the rights under this subsection only. Any person under this subsection may waive his or her rights under this subsection by any written statement notarized by a notary public or signed by two witnesses.

(b) A person who does not exercise his or her right to dispose of the decedent's body under subdivision (a)(2) of this section within five days of notification or 10 days from date of death, whichever is earlier, shall be deemed to have waived his or her right to authorize disposition of the decedent's body or to contest disposition in accordance with this section. Pursuant to G.S. 130A-415(c) or (j), upon such a waiver, and upon the Commissioner of Anatomy declining or failing to request delivery of the dead body, the director of social services having the duty to dispose of the human remains shall become vested with all interests and rights to the dead body and shall authorize and arrange for disposition, including cremation.

(c) An individual at least 18 years of age may, in a writing signed by the individual, authorize the cremation and disposition of one or more of the individual's body parts that has been or will be removed. If the individual does not authorize the cremation and disposition, a person listed in subdivision (a)(2) of this section may authorize the cremation and disposition as if the individual were deceased.

(d) This section does not apply to the disposition of dead human bodies as anatomical gifts under Part 3A of Article 16 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes or the right to perform autopsies under Part 2 of Article 16 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes. (2003-420, s. 2; 2007-531, s. 22; 2008-153, s. 5; 2010-191, s. 2; 2018-78, s. 15.)