



Guide to Service Level Agreements (SLA)

A Service Level Agreement (SLA) is a contract between the funeral director/company (customer) and a provider (service provider). A service level agreement defines the service they must provide, the level of service to be delivered and sets out responsibilities and priorities.

To comply with the SAIF Code of Practice an SLA is required if you engage a company or individual to provide a service for your company which is of significant importance to you. For example, when the supplier's services are critical to you meeting your customer's requirements and your standards of service.

It is important that you are involved in drawing up the agreement together with the supplier.

Benefits of a Service Level Agreement:

1. A proper SLA helps to strengthen communication, so that both parties come to better understand each other's need, priorities, and concerns.
2. The SLA process facilitates the identification and discussion of expectations. Therefore, the two parties will achieve shared expectations about required services and service delivery.
3. With shared understanding about needs and priorities, an SLA helps to minimize the number of any deviations of the service resulting in a failure to meet expectations and cause disagreements.
4. An SLA will provide a mechanism for periodic reviews and modifications to services, expectations, and responsibilities due to any changes in both the customers and service providers circumstances.
5. With the presence of an agreement the SLA provides a consistent basis for assessing the service effectiveness.

Key clauses in a Service Level Agreement

1. The specific detail of the service being provided (e.g., Refrigeration facilities)
2. Standards of service e.g., for refrigeration this may include: -
 - 7-day 24-hour access.
 - Security
 - Temperature range
 - Specific number of spaces
 - Identification
 - H & S
 - Equipment
 - Recording of deceased information, receiving, and releasing dates etc.

3. Responsibilities of each party (who does what?)
4. Monitoring and reporting of the service (breakdowns, restriction of access etc.)
5. Legal and regulatory compliance (e.g., security and access to/for mortuary/documents/GDPR etc.)
6. Payment terms
7. Dispute resolution
8. Confidentiality and non-disclosure provisions
9. Renewal and termination of the agreement
10. Building in formal performance reviews is key to success.
11. If your supplier fails to meet agreed service levels, your agreement should provide for compensation. It is important to identify the most critical components of the service and apply clear penalties to these.

As the needs of your business change, you may require different performance criteria and your SLA should provide for this allowing for regular discussion and renegotiation. Changes in legislation, Government departmental requirements and codes of practice need to be allowed for.

Any agreement that sets standards and requirements for the provision of a service or product from an outside provider can be described as an SLA. The member can decide whether to have an agreement or not however, there are some of such importance to the care of the deceased that SAIF will expect one to be in place. These are shown below.

Examples of services requiring a Service Level Agreement that SAIF would expect to be in place.

- Refrigeration facilities
- Embalming services on a term basis (i.e., three, six or twelve month terms).
- Deceased transfer service on a term basis (i.e., three, six or twelve month terms).
- Obituary services