**SECTION 5: COMPLETING THE SCENE INVESTIGATION:**

**MAINTAIN JURISDICTION OVER THE BODY**: Maintaining jurisdiction over the body allows the Coroner Investigator to protect the chain of custody as the body is transported from the scene for examination or storage. If investigation indicates an autopsy is required, the Coroner Investigator will dispatch the appropriate carrier to remove the remains to the location where an autopsy will be performed. Dispatch of the transporter should be made as soon as the Coroner Investigator has an estimated time of completion of scene investigation such that the transporter will arrive as close as possible to that time.

***When jurisdiction has been terminated in an investigation, the funeral home selected by the next of kin is to be* s*ummoned to pick up the remains. The Coroner’s Office assumes no responsibility for transportation costs in these cases. However, the Coroner’s Office has a responsibility to assure that the remains are removed.***

**Infectious Cases:** It is incumbent on the Coroner Investigator to notify all parties concerned when a case is known to be infectious. This would include the carrier, the funeral home, EMS, law enforcement, public health if a reportable disease and any other parties who might have contact with the body.

**RELEASE JURISDICTION OF THE BODY**: Prior to releasing jurisdiction of the body to an authorized receiving agent or funeral director, it is necessary to determine the person responsible for certification of the death. Information to complete the death certificate includes demographic information and the date, time, and location of death. If the manner of death has been determined to be homicide the coroner’s office shall notify head of the law enforcement with jurisdiction and the prosecutor of the intent to release the body.

**When releasing jurisdiction over the body, the Coroner Investigator should:**

1. Determine who will sign the death certificate (name, agency, etc.)
2. Confirm the date, time, and location of death
3. Arrange with the authorized receiving agent to reconcile all death certificate information
4. Release the body to a funeral director or other authorized receiving agent as appropriate

**PERFORM EXIT PROCEDURES**: Bringing closure to the scene investigation ensures that important evidence has been collected and the scene has been processed. In addition, a systematic review of the scene ensures that artifacts or equipment are not inadvertently left behind (e.g., used disposable gloves, paramedical debris, etc.) and any dangerous materials or conditions have been reported. When performing exit procedures, the Coroner Investigator should:

1. Identify, inventory, and remove all evidence collected at the scene
2. Remove all personal equipment and materials from the scene
3. Report and document any dangerous materials or conditions

**FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATIONS:** The Coroner Investigator will be responsible for continued investigation on all deaths managed by him/her. Follow-up investigations will be documented as appropriate using forms provided by the Coroner’s Office. Subsequent scene investigation, photography and interviews with families and/or witnesses will be coordinated with the appropriate law enforcement agency of jurisdiction. New findings affecting the nature of the investigation will be reported immediately to the coroner and law enforcement.

**INFORMING THE PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER:** The Coroner Investigator shall notify the primary care provider of the patient’s death within 24 hours of initial notification of death. Exceptions to this directive will be hospital or care-facility deaths. Those facilities usually have a policy that requires primary care provider notification. However, the Coroner Investigator shall insure that facility’s policy is to make a timely notification. The Coroner Investigator may adopt a personal policy to inform the primary care provider and duplicate the efforts of the hospital or other care facility.

**SUBPOENA**: It will frequently be necessary for the Coroner Investigator to follow-up on cases by collecting information from various sources. Although many individuals and agencies will provide information that is subsequently summarized and documented by the Coroner Investigator, a subpoena is sometimes necessary to get documents, records, lab samples and other materials.

The subpoena issued by the Coroner’s Office representative is for materials that relate only to the cause and the manner of the death being investigated. For medical records, a copy of the record is sufficient. In certain cases, where the original must be reviewed, the coroner will give authorization to request the original records and the subpoena must indicate that original records are required.

**Failure to comply with a Coroner’s Office subpoena:** When there is a failure to comply with the conditions of a Coroner’s Office subpoena, the Coroner Investigator should first attempt to clarify the position and needs of the Coroner’s Office with the individual, or the individual's supervisor. If the Coroner Investigator is unable to resolve the matter, he or she should report the incident to the Coroner. All pertinent information must be obtained now, which would include the reason(s) the person is failing to comply and specifically what information is being sought or is needed by the Coroner’s Office. Continued refusal to comply with the subpoena is to be referred to the Coroner, where the County Sheriff, District Attorney or appropriate judge will be contacted for further direction. Strict adherence to the rules governing the use of the Subpoena by Coroner’s Office must be observed and maintained. The Coroner may request that the court sign the subpoena.