**SECTION 12: DEATH CERTIFICATES**

**DEATH CERTIFICATES NOT SIGNED BY A PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN**

Death Certificates for decedents under jurisdiction of the Union County Coroner’s Office for autopsy will be signed by the Coroner or a Deputy Coroner.

1. If cause and manner of death can be determined at time of autopsy, the Death Certificate shall be signed with those findings considered.
2. If cause and manner of death cannot be determined at time of autopsy, then a Death Certificate Indicating “Pending” shall be signed.
3. If a Death Certificate indicating “Pending” is signed, a final Death Certificate should be issued immediately upon completing the investigation.
4. Occasionally, a decedent may not have an established relationship with an Ohio physician. However, the scene investigation revealed the decedent had significant, verifiable medical history. The Coroner Investigator may either release the decedent on scene or request transport of the decedent to the Union County Morgue. In either case, the Death Certifier shall be a representative from the Union County Coroner’s Office.

**DEATH CERTIFICATES INDICATING “PENDING”**

*“The physician in charge of the patient's care for the illness or condition which resulted in death shall complete, sign, and return to the funeral director or person acting as such all medical certification within forty-eight hours after a death occurs. In the absence of said physician or with his approval, the certificate may be completed and signed by his associate physician, by the chief medical officer of the institution in which the death occurred, or by the physician who performed an autopsy upon the decedent, if such individual has access to the medical history of the case, if he views the deceased at or after the time of death, and if the death is due to natural causes.”*

The Union County Coroner’s Office recognizes at times a mortuary/funeral home may need to release a decedent for burial, cremation or transport and the designated certifier is unavailable. Because of these events, the Coroner or Deputy Coroner/ Investigator may assist under the following conditions:

1. If the decedent’s primary care physician (designated certifier) is unavailable to sign a Death Certificate, the mortuary/funeral home personnel shall make every effort to have the Death Certificate indicating “Pending” signed by an associate of the designated certifier.
   1. Mortuary/funeral home personnel need to assure the associate of the designated certifier they are signing a Death Certificate indicating “Pending” and are not rendering a determination on the cause and manner of death in any way.
   2. In the event the designated certifier’s associate is unavailable or unwilling to sign a Death Certificate indicating “Pending Investigation”, the Coroner or a Deputy Coroner/ Investigator may sign.
2. Mortuary/funeral home personnel should be prepared to detail which doctors they talked with and why they refused to sign for their associate.
3. Mortuary/funeral home personnel should be prepared to give a complete report of the circumstances of death, including medical history, to the Coroner Investigator to determine if signing the Death Certificate is appropriate.

**REJECTED DEATH CERTIFICATES**

The Local or State Registrar’s Office may, from time to time, reject a Death Certificate based on many criteria. Usually, the rejection is due to the manner of death being classified as “Accident” or the cause of death is typically not a natural disease.

1. If the Death Certificate has been rejected due to manner of death being listed as “Accident”, a Coroner’s Case shall be initiated.
   1. Notice of the rejection may come from either the local or state registrar or the corresponding mortuary/ funeral home.
   2. The Coroner Investigator who received notification of the rejection shall create a case file, investigate and complete all usual and customary documents to determine if the cause of death and manner of death, as reported by the certifier on the rejected Death Certificate, is appropriate.
2. If the rejected Death Certificates related to an unacceptable cause description and that manner of death is “Natural”, the Coroner Investigator may assist in correcting the Death Certificate and no Investigation is indicated.