

<b>Charleston County Coroner's Office Policy #13</b>	
<b>Title:</b> Death Certificates	<b>Page:</b> 1 of 4
<b>Effective Date:</b> 8/6/2014 <b>Updated:</b> 7/17/2019, 5/26/2021 <b>Reviewed:</b> 9/15/2023 <b>Authorized By:</b> Bobbi Jo O'Neal, Coroner	

### 13.1 POLICY

A death certificate is issued to document every death. The filing of death certificates is addressed in State Statute 44-63-74(A), which shall be followed accordingly.

### 13.2 PROCEDURE

1. The State Statute 44-63-74(A) is copied below because it delineates the requirements for filing of death certificates.

“Effective January 1, 2016

#### **Death certificates, electronic filing**

Section 44-63-74(A) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

(A) (1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, death certificates must be electronically filed with the Bureau of Vital Statistics as prescribed by the State Registrar of Vital Statistics within five days after death.

(2) The funeral director or other person acting as the funeral director who first assumes custody of a dead body shall file a death certificate. He also shall obtain:

(a) the personal data of the decedent from the next of kin or the best-qualified person or source available; and

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(b) the medical certification of cause of death as provided in department regulations.

(3) Medical certifications of cause of death must be completed and returned to the funeral home director within forty-eight hours after receipt of notice of the death by the physician in charge of the patient's care for the illness or condition which resulted in death, except when an inquiry is required by a coroner or medical examiner. If the cause of death cannot be determined within forty-eight hours after death, the medical certification must be entered as pending, and the physician, medical examiner, or coroner shall submit a supplemental report to the state registrar on a form furnished by or approved by him as soon as practicable. The supplemental report shall be made a part of the death certificate. If the forty-eight-hour period terminates on a weekend, federal holiday, or state holiday, the physician must file the certification by the end of the next business day. In the absence of this physician or with his approval, the certificate may be completed by his associate physician, the chief medical officer of the institution in which the death occurred, or by the pathologist who performed an autopsy upon the decedent.

(4) Death certificates must be transmitted electronically between the funeral home director and the physician, coroner, or medical examiner certifying the cause of death in order to document the death certificate information prescribed by this chapter. Required signatures on death certificates must be provided by electronic signature. An individual who acts, without compensation, as a funeral director on behalf of a deceased family member or friend, physicians certifying fewer than twelve deaths per year, and funeral homes that perform fewer than twelve funerals per year

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are exempt from the requirement to file electronically but must comply with the requirements of items (2) or (3), as applicable.

(5)(a) A physician who fails to certify the cause of death within forty-eight hours, without good cause shown, may be assessed an administrative penalty for violating item (3). The department shall notify the Board of Medical Examiners if a penalty is assessed. Each day after the initial forty-eight-hour period shall constitute an additional violation.

(b) A funeral home or funeral director who fails to file a death certificate or collect data or collect medical certification of cause of death as required in items (1), (2), or both, without good cause shown, may be assessed an administrative penalty for violating the respective item. However, the department must not assess a penalty against a funeral home or funeral director for the delay or inability to collect personal data of the decedent pursuant to item (2)(a). The department shall notify the Board of Funeral Services if a penalty is assessed. Each day after the initial five-day period in item (1) shall constitute an additional violation of that item.

(c) A physician, funeral director, or funeral home that is required to file electronically pursuant to item (4) but who fails to file accordingly may be assessed an administrative penalty for violating item (4).

(d) The administrative penalties are:

(i) two hundred fifty dollars for a first violation or a warning letter;

(ii) five hundred dollars for a second violation; and

(iii) one thousand dollars for a third or subsequent violation.

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(e) The department shall retain any administrative penalties collected pursuant to this subsection and must allocate all of these funds to the Bureau of Vital Statistics for its use.

(B) For purposes of this section, an electronic signature shall be as defined pursuant to the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act, Chapter 6, Title 26.”

2. The Coroner, deputy coroners, and other designees as determined by the Coroner will be assigned login and password authorization to access the South Carolina Vital Records and Statistics Integrated Information System (SC VRSIIS) in order to create, certify and/or amend death certificates.

3. Funeral directors will generate the death certificate within VRSIIS and electronically assign it to the Coroner’s Office for certification of cause and manner. When the Coroner or a Deputy Coroner certifies the record, the death record is released and the funeral home is notified of its completion. When the funeral home has completed the demographic portion, they release that section and the record is filed with SC Vital Records.

4. If a member of the Coroner’s Office certifies a death certificate or completes a Supplemental Report of Medical Certification of Death, a digital copy will be kept in the decedent’s case file/electronic record.

5. It is the responsibility of the funeral director to obtain copies of the final death certificate for the next of kin.