

Charleston County Coroner's Office Policy #8

Title: Communication

Page: 1 of 4

Effective Date: 8/6/2014

Updated: 6/19/2019

Reviewed: 3/17/2021, 9/8/2023

Authorized By: Bobbi Jo O'Neal, Coroner

8.1 POLICY

The main function of the communication system is to satisfy the immediate information needs of the office and support the daily and emergent operations. The speed and accuracy in which information flows from the community to the Charleston County Coroner's Office improves the capability of the office to respond to the needs of the community, in an efficient and effective manner. It is the responsibility of all employees to be aware of all available communication methods and utilize them in an appropriate manner. A cell phone, an iPad, and an 800 MHz radio shall be issued at the Coroner's discretion.

8.2 PROCEDURE

Basic Communication Structure:

1) Consolidated 9-1-1 Center

- a.** The primary method of communication is by phone. Call the first responder line at 843-743-7123.
- b.** When a death call occurs where EMS/FIRE or law enforcement have responded, dispatch will notify the on-duty Deputy Coroner for this office via text or telephone if unable to reach via text.

Communication

- c. Each Deputy Coroner is assigned a call sign and a handheld 800 MHz radio. A radio is installed in each assigned vehicle.
- d. All forms of communication with dispatch are monitored and recorded.

2) Contracted Answering Service

Calls coming into the Charleston County Coroner's Office during the hours of 4:31 pm - 8:29 am and on weekends and holidays are forwarded to the contracted answering service and are dispatched according to the "On-Duty" schedule.

3) Charleston County Coroner's Office Telephones

- a. During office hours the telephone will be answered by the Administrative Receptionist when possible or other personnel when necessary.
- b. The telephone should be answered professionally by identifying the office and the name of the individual answering the telephone. *Example: "Charleston County Coroner's Office. This is _____."*
- c. Maintain professional demeanor especially when helping emotional callers.
- d. The person answering the telephone should ask for the caller's name and the nature of the call. If the call is in reference to a death, the name of the decedent and the date of death should be obtained from the caller or from the records management system.
- e. Calls should be forwarded to the appropriate person unless that person is not available. Before the call is forwarded, the person who is to receive the call should be advised of the caller's name and the nature of the call, if known.
- f. If the Deputy Coroner who handled a death is not available to take the call, the following guidelines should apply:

Communication

1. If the call is regarding a decedent who died in the previous four days or the caller is emotionally distraught, the call should be referred to another Deputy Coroner or a Supervisor.
 2. If the death is greater than 4 days, ask the individual if they would like to leave a voice mail for the case Deputy Coroner or speak with another Deputy.
 3. If the Deputy Coroner for whom the call was made will not be available to return the call within the next three days, the call should be referred to another Deputy Coroner.
- g.** Other than office phone numbers, alternate phone numbers for Charleston County Coroner's Office personnel will not be published or provided to the public by other employees.

4) Written Messages

- a.** If it is necessary to take a message, it should be written in the MDI communication section regarding that particular case and the case Deputy and the Deputy Supervisor should also be tagged. If they are not available, the Chief Deputy should be tagged. If there are any questions or problems, the caller should be referred to another Deputy Coroner who is currently present in the office.
- b.** If a Deputy Coroner knows phone calls may come in before they arrive in the office (ie: they are going to autopsy or are on an early morning scene), they need to have the case in MDI and can also email or call the Administrative Receptionist to give them a heads up and how they would like them to handle (take a message, relay directly to deputy, etc.).
- c.** If a call comes in and is from the previous night and the Deputy Coroner isn't in the office yet, the message is put in

Communication

MDI and tagged as described above. Additionally, the Administrative Receptionist may also call/text the Deputy Coroner and relay the message. The call taker will also ask (especially with family) if they would like to speak to a different Deputy (Deputy Coroner Supervisor) along with taking the message and putting it into MDI.

5) Documentation Of Communication With Others

All phone calls or in-person conversations or other pertinent communication with next-of-kin, other family members, law-enforcement personnel, or any other parties shall be documented in the Communications Log section of MDI for that case.