



Next of Kin Notification/Update Policy

Policy# 13-0110-1 NOK Notification **Total pages=** 2

Purpose: To have a standardized policy in confirming and documenting next of kin notification in coroner cases; to keep the next of kin updated as the investigation progresses.

Justification: Typically, next of kin notification is done by law enforcement in pre-hospital deaths and by the pronouncing physician in hospital deaths. However, in cases accepted by the coroner's office, it is this office's responsibility to ensure that the legal next of kin has been notified and to document the next of kin and by whom they were notified. It is this office's responsibility to keep the next of kin updated with the investigation.

Policy:

- 1.** Next of Kin may be abbreviated as NOK in this policy and in documentation.
- 2.** Next of kin in order of legal acceptance: spouse, (common law if before October 10th, 1991), adult child, parents, siblings, grandparents, aunt/uncle, niece/nephew. This list is not inclusive, and others may be necessary to contact after this list is exhausted.
- 3.** Death notification is preferred to be made in person; occasionally circumstances make phone notification necessary. If phone notification is necessary, consider the fact that the family member may be alone.
- 4.** This policy recognizes that the legal next of kin may not be available for the reporting authority to notify and another relative will be notified first. In those cases, this office must make sufficient effort to see that the legal next of kin is notified.
- 5.** The investigator will document who was notified, when and by whom. Also note if a relative other than the legal next of kin had to be notified initially and why. Follow-up documentation will be made when the legal next of kin has been notified.
- 6.** The lead investigator will keep the NOK updated on the investigation status as necessary.
- 7.** The lead investigator will contact the NOK with any preliminary findings.

- 8.** The lead investigator will contact the NOK once the final death certificate has been completed.
- 9.** On active criminal investigations, the NOK will be updated as needed but no details will be shared that could compromise the criminal investigation. In these cases, the family will be directed to contact law enforcement with any questions.
- 10.** A family follow-up letter will be mailed to the family with instructions on how to get a certified copy of the death certificate and how to request the coroner's report/s.
- 11.** All phone calls with family will be recorded when possible and uploaded to the case folder.
- 12.** All family communications with family will be documented in the case database as an updated coroner summary report.
- 13.** The investigation will document if the legal next of kin designates another person as point of contact for follow-up communications.

This policy has been approved and is in effect until further notice:


Benjamin Trotter, DO, Coroner


Date