

Charleston County Coroner's Office Policy #45

Title: Unidentified, Not Notified or Undetermined Manner and Cause Cases
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45.1 POLICY

1. As new techniques and services become available, and databases expand, it may be possible to submit specimens and/or obtain other information that might prove valuable in positively identifying previously unidentified individuals; or locating next-of-kin; or determining 'Manner' and 'Cause' in those cases where both are currently classified as 'Undetermined'.
2. It is the policy of the Coroner's Office to review these types of cases at the Coroner's discretion. The review process should involve a review of the written record and may include: a comparison to NamUs, NCIC, AFIS, and follow-up efforts with the law enforcement agency of record, forensic pathologists, toxicologists, and/or other witnesses. A review team for each case shall consist of either the Coroner or Chief Deputy; the original case deputy, when available; and at least one other staff member (sworn or non-sworn) as determined by the Coroner or designee.
3. Utilize a copy of the appropriate checklist which is included at the end of this policy to guide the review and submit to the case file in addition to a supplemental report narrative to memorialize the fact that the case was reviewed, and any actions taken.

45.2 PROCEDURE

1. Positive identification efforts should include the following:

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- a) The case file will be reviewed to determine what steps were taken at the time of death regarding positive identification.
- b) Submit a DNA sample to CODIS and/or re-submit.
- c) If postmortem fingerprint cards are available, they will be re-submitted to AFIS.
- d) Check NCIC Missing Person files and/or coordinate this with law enforcement.
- e) Conduct a web search and compare the available information regarding the decedent.
- f) Consider the distribution of information and/or a facial picture to the local law enforcement agencies. Some jailers and law enforcement officers know offenders by name and may be helpful.
- g) Review original entry or submit information to NamUs. Update if necessary.
- h) If any personal property or other evidence is in custody, search through the items thoroughly to look for leads. Check with the original law enforcement agency as they may have some property or evidence in custody.
- i) Consider media campaigns.

2. Efforts to locate next of kin should include:

- a) The case file will be reviewed to determine what steps were taken at the time of death regarding locating next of kin.
- b) The decedent's name, date of birth, Social Security number, and any other pertinent information will be searched through the currently available technology to obtain additional information.
- c) Any information that was previously available regarding possible family members will be searched through the currently available technology in an attempt to obtain additional information.
- d) If any personal property or other evidence is in custody, search the items thoroughly to look for leads. Check with original law enforcement agency as they may have some property or evidence in custody.
- e) All leads will be followed. All possible family members will be called or contacted in person.
- f) Pertinent information regarding the decedent will be placed in NamUs.

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3. For 'Undetermined' Manner and Cause of Death:

- a) Review case file to determine what steps were taken at the time of death regarding determination of 'Manner' and 'Cause'.
- b) Determine what, if anything, need further investigation or examination.
- c) Determine which, if any, new investigative techniques, or technologies may be helpful.
- d) Consider consulting law enforcement and/or forensic pathologist or other specialists.
- e) Determine if re-interviewing witnesses would be prudent.
- f) If any personal property or other evidence is in custody, search through the items thoroughly to look for leads. Check with original law enforcement agency as they may have some property or evidence in custody.

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Checklist for Unidentified Decedents

Coroner's Case # _____ **DoD** _____ **Review Date:** _____

Reviewers Names: _____

1. Review case file. _____
2. Consult with original law enforcement agency if necessary. Consider distribution of picture of decedent's face. _____
3. If fingerprints are available, have them run in AFIS again. _____
4. Check NCIC Missing Person files and/or coordinate this with law enforcement. _____
5. Enter DNA (if available) into NamUs. _____
6. Enter in Unidentified Persons Database in the NamUS system if necessary. _____
7. Conduct web search using available information regarding decedent. _____
8. Search property/evidence. _____
9. Consider media campaign. _____
10. Record any findings in supplemental narrative and place this checklist and supplement in case file. _____

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Checklist for Not Notified Cases

Decedent Name _____ **DoD** _____ **Review Date:** _____

Reviewers Names: _____

1. Review case file. _____
2. Consult with original law enforcement agency if necessary. _____
3. Search decedent's name, date of birth, SSN and other information through currently available internet technology. _____
4. Search any previous information regarding possible family members through currently available internet technology. _____
4. Enter in NamUs UnClaimed Persons database (UCP) or review NamUs entry. _____
5. Search property/evidence. _____
6. Record any findings in supplemental narrative and place this checklist and supplement in case file. _____

Unidentified, Not Notified or Undetermined Manner and Cause Cases

Undetermined 'Manner' and 'Cause' Cases Checklist

Decedent Name _____ **DoD** _____ **Review Date:** _____

Reviewers Names: _____

1. Review case file. _____
2. Determine and follow up on investigative leads, if any. _____
3. Consult with original law enforcement agency if necessary. _____
4. Consult with forensic pathologist or other specialist if necessary. _____
5. Search property/evidence. _____
6. Interview witnesses if deemed necessary and possible. _____
7. Record any findings in supplemental narrative and place this checklist and supplement in case file. _____