

Death Certificates

Created 11/28/2010
Revised 09/22/2023

Purpose

To define who has the responsibility of certifying cause and manner of death within [REDACTED]

Policy

The [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] by issuing a Certificate of Death, will certify cause and manner of death on all cases which fall under its jurisdiction in accordance with CRS 30-10-606 and 15-10-106.5; a medical or osteopathic physician licensed within Colorado can sign a death certificate for any natural death occurring within the State where coroner's jurisdiction has been terminated. When [REDACTED] has conducted an investigation and assumed jurisdiction, the coroner's office will initiate a death certificate in cases where the manner of death is natural, suicide, accident, homicide, or undetermined.

Procedures

Statutory Responsibility:

The [REDACTED] [REDACTED] will be responsible for certifying cause and manner of death whenever a case originates in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and is brought in for autopsy, when an external examination has been performed in the office or in the field, or when records are reviewed by the forensic pathologist in cases where jurisdiction is retained but no exam performed (records review cases).

After the examination has been completed, the forensic pathologist will provide the office administrator or other office staff member with the information to be contained on the death certificate. The funeral home shall provide the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the death certificate for completion and signature, preferably via the electronic death certificate registry system (EDRS). The [REDACTED] [REDACTED] will fill in the medical certifier's section of the death certificate and sign the death certificate.

Special Circumstances:

Consult Cases: If the [REDACTED] is asked to consult on a death, once the cause and manner of death are determined the [REDACTED] will initiate a death certificate if requested by the agency instigating the consult (on Colorado cases only). Consultation cases for states other than Colorado will be certified by the proper authority in that state following receipt of the results of the [REDACTED] examination/investigation.

Family Burials: Whenever a family elects to do a direct burial without appointing a funeral home or mortuary in an [REDACTED] case, the [REDACTED] will refer the next of kin to the [REDACTED]

Public Health Department (ACPH) after initiating the death certificate. ACPH will assist the family in completing the death certificate and other required paperwork and provide copies as required. A Burial Transit Permit may be signed by the to allow transport and burial of the remains.

John & Jane Does: will issue a death certificate on a John/Jane Doe case only after all attempts have been made to identify the decedent and indigent burial has been authorized.

Out-of-State Funeral Homes: Out of state funeral homes handling funerals for persons who die in Colorado can work in conjunction with a Colorado based funeral home to complete the death certificate and arrange for either cremation or embalming.

Pending Cases: When an examination/investigation is conducted by the and the cause and/or manner of death has not been determined, the will issue a "pending" death certificate to the funeral home in lieu of the final death certificate. Once cause and manner of death are determined, an amended death certificate will be initiated and sent to the funeral home selected by the family. Although a pending death certificate may be issued, it does not preclude the family from proceeding with arrangements for burial or cremation unless the pathologist has put a "hold" on the body. In those cases, the next-of-kin will be given a possible release time and date.

Stillborns: A Report of Fetal Death will be used for all stillborns which fall under the jurisdiction of the. The will complete its portion of the report and forward the report to the hospital where death occurred for completion and filing. Public Health does not require a Report of Fetal Death for stillborns under 500 grams.

Presumptive Deaths (CRS 25-2-110(7)): If an individual has been missing and is believed dead, next of kin may petition the District Court in the respective county for an Order of Presumptive Death. The court will weigh the facts presented and may issue an Order of Presumptive Death. The order may designate an effective date of death. This procedure is frequently used in cases of witnessed or suspected accidents where a body is never recovered. Legal counsel on behalf of the NOK must provide documentation concerning the disappearance and all efforts to locate including police reports, newspaper accounts, witness' statements, etc. When the order is issued, a certified copy of that order must be presented to the. Upon receipt, it will be directed to a medicolegal death investigator who will prepare a Preliminary Report of Death. The death certificate will then be initiated and signed as directed by court order. The NOK will then be referred to the ACPH for completion of the death certificate and filing.

Cremation:

The death certificate serves as the permit for cremation. All deaths that fall under the jurisdiction of the are required to have the death certificate reviewed by the coroner or an authorized representative. This may be accomplished by having the death certificate faxed to the. A body cannot be cremated until an "ok for permit" has been signed by an authorized representative of the even in cases where the cause or manner of death is pending. Stillborns less than 500 grams do not require a cremation permit. Cremation can take place at the request of the family.

Burial Permits:

The burial, transit, and/or cremation permit is required when the death certificate has not been issued. The funeral home or other agency, once in control of the remains, may initiate a permit. This is done on a blank death certificate form and is reviewed by Public Health in concert with the.

[REDACTED]

Amendments to Death Certificate:

Death certificates are usually amended because of a typographical error resulting in inaccurate information. Amendments should be avoided if at all possible. If access to a death certificate that has not been filed exists, the original death certificate should be amended to reflect the change or a new certificate should be issued. In order for an amendment to be valid, all copies of the originally filed death certificate must be recalled.

Simple changes to correct typographical errors may be accomplished through the [REDACTED] Public Health Department by the designated funeral home. In non-jurisdictional cases (declined or coroner released cases), changes in the cause of death can only be made by the primary care physician through the funeral home (only if the cause of death reflects a death due to natural causes). If trauma or suspicious death information is to be changed or added to the death certificate, that change can only be made by the [REDACTED].

Whenever a death certificate is to be amended by the [REDACTED] a copy of the amendment shall be regenerated by the funeral home, sent to the [REDACTED] Public Health Department, and a copy will remain in the file.

If an amendment is necessary to change the date of death, place of death, pronouncement date or time, manner of death or cause of death, and if the death certificate has already been filed, a complete death certificate will be generated by the funeral home, resigned with the corrections already made and sent to [REDACTED] Public Health (with the notation "AMENDED" typed in the center at the top of the death certificate).

Policy/Procedure Violations

Violations of this policy are grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

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Approved by: [REDACTED]