



Release of Information and Records Retention Policy (revised 04/03/23)

Policy# 14-0409-1 Release of Information and Records Retention Policy

Purpose: To provide a standard for releasing of information on a Public Records request.
To fulfill a Public Records request without compromising a criminal or potential criminal death investigation and following the Ohio Revised Code Section 313.10.

To have a standardized policy on records retention.

Policy:

1. **No reports will be released** until the case has had final ruling on cause and manner of death.
2. This policy includes requests from the media, the general public, and the next of kin and/or all parties representing the next of kin.
3. This policy does not affect sharing of information with law enforcement during a death investigation.
4. No records will be released during an active criminal investigation and/or if those records are considered: "Confidential law enforcement investigatory record" means any record that pertains to a law enforcement matter of a criminal, quasi-criminal, civil, or administrative nature, but only to the extent that the release of the record would create a high probability of disclosure of any of the following:
 - (a) The identity of a suspect who has not been charged with the offense to which the record pertains, or of an information source or witness to whom confidentiality has been reasonably promised;
 - (b) Information provided by an information source or witness to whom confidentiality has been reasonably promised, which information would reasonably tend to disclose the source's or witness's identity;
 - (c) Specific confidential investigatory techniques or procedures or specific investigatory work product;

(d) Information that would endanger the life or physical safety of law enforcement personnel, a crime victim, a witness, or a confidential information source.

5. Only after a criminal investigation case is considered closed by the prosecutor and/or the investigating law enforcement agency will reports generated by and/or for this office be released under the Public Records law.
6. While a criminal investigation is on-going, a meeting with the family will be offered to discuss the findings.
7. At no time, unless by an appropriate court ordered subpoena, will case photos or investigator's work sheets be released to a Public Records request.
8. Photos will be made available to be viewed but not photocopied in any manner under an appropriate Public Records request as per ORC 313.10.
9. Any request for release of information that this policy does not address or is in question, **shall** be submitted to coroner and/or prosecuting attorney for direction.
10. This policy does not supersede the ORC 313.10 (Records to be Public) or ORC 149.43(Confidential law enforcement investigatory record)
11. All records directly related to the death investigation will be retained indefinitely in electronic form only.
12. All investigative handwritten notes shall be shredded once entered into the database and no longer needed.
13. Records not directly related to a death investigation will be destroyed once they are no longer needed.
14. Item #11 does not apply to invoices and other documents required by other departments of the county government. These documents will be retained per that department's requirement.

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



Ben Trotter, DO
Office of the Coroner, Ross County, Ohio



Date