

## Requests for Autopsy

---

### Policy:

There must be a sound **forensic** reason for an autopsy to be performed by the Skagit County Coroner's Office with expenditure of county funds. A request by a family member, physician, other individual, or other special interest group for an autopsy examination is not a proper reason, in and of itself, for the Coroner's Office to assume jurisdiction and perform an autopsy. A proper reason for jurisdiction must be established before consideration of what type of postmortem examination, if any, is warranted. This decision is based on what is known about the individual case (comes from the reporting party, family, physician, and medical records), Washington State law defining jurisdiction, and the formal death investigation training and professional judgment of the Coroner staff as well as the contracted Board-certified Forensic Pathologist (when asked). The Coroner's Office may give consideration to the *reason* that an autopsy is being requested when making the decision to perform an autopsy or not.

When a body is released from a scene directly to a funeral home, the investigator should make sure that the family is aware that there will be no further examination made by the Skagit County Coroner's Office.

When a family member, physician, or other individual or group requests that an autopsy be done, the requesting person should be asked the specific reason(s) for the request. The request and reason(s) shall be brought to the attention of the Coroner as soon as feasible/reasonable. Contact information for the requesting party and the request being made need to be documented in *case notes* of MDI log. A message should also be added to the *communications log* and include the incoming investigator as well as the Coroner.

The person requesting the autopsy should be contacted soon after the decision to autopsy or not autopsy is made and informed of the decision and reasoning for the decision. If the requesting party still intends to move forward with a private autopsy, this office will not provide any recommendations of private pathologists. The requestor can contact the funeral home or search on-line for a private autopsy.

Refer to RW 68.50.010; Coroner's Jurisdiction over Remains.