



Requirements and guidelines for notification of death

updated: September 4, 2015

Pursuant to State of Alabama Act 79-454, the Jefferson County Coroner/Medical Examiner's Office must be notified when a death occurs in one of the following categories or circumstances:

1. Criminal violence or criminal neglect (homicide)
2. Accident
3. Suicide
4. Suspicious or unusual circumstances, including sudden and unexpected deaths of infants, children, and adults
5. Criminal abortion
6. Any death in police custody
7. Any death in a prison or penal institution
8. Disease constituting a hazard to public health when requested in writing by the County Health Officer
9. When a body is to be cremated, dissected, or buried at sea
10. When a body is brought into this state without proper medical certification

Pursuant to State of Alabama Code 11-5-35 (*Act 2006-581, p. 1527, §6.*) the Jefferson County Coroner/Medical Examiner's Office only has the authority to certify a death if the offense, occurrence, or incident that ultimately resulted in the death occurred within the geographical boundaries of Jefferson County, Alabama. Therefore, if the sequence of events that ultimately resulted in the death began in a county or state other than Jefferson County, Alabama then the coroner's office of that county should be notified of the death.

The following are guidelines to follow on deaths known or suspected to be coroner's cases:

DO

- report all deaths which are known or suspected to fall within the jurisdiction of the Coroner/Medical Examiner's statute (for Jefferson County call: (205) 930-3603).
- note in the chart any treatments or procedures employed.
- distinguish between pre-treatment injuries or needle marks and treatment incisions and needle marks.
- notify laboratory to retain all blood and urine specimens.
- make a copy of the medical chart for the coroner's office.



DO NOT

- ask the next-of-kin for permission to perform an autopsy until after you have cleared the case with the coroner's office.
- approve organ transplantation prior to contacting the coroner's office when dealing with a case that has possible medical-legal ramifications.
- remove any medical device introduced into or onto the patient's body, e.g. bandages, nasogastric or endotracheal tubes, catheters.
- dispose of any body fluids.
- close wounds in any way after death.
- remove chest tubes after death in cases of gunshot wounds instead, clamp the end of the tube so no bullet will be lost.
- wash or otherwise clean remains after death.
- dispose of, lose, or return clothing that came in with decedent to the family; retain and give to police or coroner.
- cut through stab or bullet holes in clothing when disrobing the patient.
- remove dirty linen from beneath the body; wrap body in it.
- dispose of blood or urine samples obtained at the time of admission – hold for coroner.
- jump to conclusions in suspected child abuse or neglect cases prior to affording the medical examiner the opportunity to investigate the case and examine the body.

If you have any question regarding these guidelines, please contact me or Chief Deputy Coroner Bill Yates at (205) 930-3603.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory G. Davis".

Gregory G. Davis, M.D.
Chief Coroner/Medical Examiner
Jefferson County, Alabama