

STATE REGISTRAR NOTICE

Subject: Follow-up with Coroners and Medical Examiners for Pending Manners and Causes of Death	Type: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Transitory	Number: 2019-12
Date Issued: September 20, 2019 Date Effective: September 20, 2019	Audience: Death Registry Stakeholders	By Direction of:  Audrey Marrocco State Registrar

The Vital Statistics Law requires that death cases be reported within four business days. There are times when the manner or cause of death must be listed as “pending” while investigations, toxicology reports, or other matters are in process. In those instances, all known information is reported, and the death is registered with the manner and/or cause of death pending. When those matters are resolved, the original record must immediately be amended with the final manner and/or cause of death. This is critical for public health purposes at the state and national level.

The Bureau of Health Statistics and Registries (BHSR) is launching an initiative to follow-up with coroners and medical examiners for pending manners and causes of death. Stakeholders can expect this follow-up to begin each quarter in the middle of the months of January, April, July, and October. However, the inaugural quarterly follow-up will start immediately to allow time to conduct an after-action review before January’s follow-up.

The process will begin with a letter sent to coroners and medical examiners along with a listing of all death cases in which the manner or cause of death is recorded as pending. For deaths reported in EDRS, this listing will include all deaths medically certified at the time the listing is produced. For deaths reported on the paper “Certificate of Death” form (H105.143), the listing will include all deaths that have been registered by a local registrar and accepted by BHSR into the Death Registry. Due to the lag time associated with paper-based reporting processes, deaths that occurred in the last six weeks may not yet be available in the Death Registry and, therefore will not be included in the listing.

BHSR has developed a structured process to track and manage the incoming responses associated with the follow-up. While the follow-up will begin with coroners and medical examiners, funeral homes and local or assistant registrars may be contacted to track down a death record amendment that may be stalled in the paper-based reporting process.

We look forward to working with our stakeholders to improve Pennsylvania’s death registration system with the timely finalization of manner and cause of death in each official death record.

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Death Registry

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