

STATE REGISTRAR NOTICE

Subject: <i>Guidance for Funeral Directors: Reporting of Deaths Attributed to COVID-19</i>	Type: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Transitory	Number: <p style="text-align: center;">2020-03</p>
Date Issued: <p style="text-align: center;">March 6, 2020</p> Date Effective: <p style="text-align: center;">March 6, 2020</p>	Audience: <p style="text-align: center;">Funeral Directors</p>	By Direction of:  Audrey Marrocco State Registrar

The Bureau of Health Statistics and Registries (BHSR) has recently received an interim guidance from the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics on the reporting of deaths where Coronavirus Disease 2019 or COVID-19 has caused or is assumed to have caused or contributed to the death of a decedent. While the CDC’s guidance focuses on the medical portion of the report of death, the guidance below specifically pertains to funeral homes that are reporting a death where COVID-19 is attributed to the death.

Mandatory Electronic Reporting of Deaths

All deaths attributed to COVID-19 are required to be reported electronically to BHSR through Pennsylvania’s Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) which is located online at <https://www.dohdave.pa.gov>. The paper “Certificate of Death” (form H105.143) or the Medical Certification Worksheet (form HD02036F) may not be used to report these deaths since there is a significant time lapse from the date of death until notification is received by BHSR. Due to the criticality of timely reporting at the state and national levels, EDRS must be used to report these deaths.

All death reporting stakeholders (including medical certifiers) are required to report COVID-19 deaths through EDRS. As such, you should not receive a paper “Certificate of Death” (form H105.143) or a Medical Certification Worksheet (form HD02036F) from the medical certifier. Medical certifiers are required to submit the report of death through EDRS prior to the release of the body to the funeral home.

Funeral homes that have not yet adopted EDRS are encouraged to proactively obtain training and EDRS account credentials. To learn more about EDRS, visit the EDRS webpage at www.doh.pa.gov/edrs and then view the “Funeral Home” information. It only takes few minutes to set-up an account.

In accordance with the Pennsylvania Vital Statistics Law of 1953¹, all deaths must be fully reported to BHSR within 4 days of the death occurring².

¹ 35 P.S. §§ 450.101 - 450.1003.

² Id. at § 450.504.

Available Information on the Routine Transmission of COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has released “Interim Guidance for Collection and Submission of Postmortem Specimens from Deceased Persons Under Investigation (PUI) for COVID-19”. This full guidance is available online at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-postmortem-specimens.html>.

Based on information currently known about COVID-19, CDC has indicated that the routine transmission of this disease is via the respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, which is similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens are spread. This route of transmission is not a concern when handling human remains or performing postmortem procedures. Funeral directors and staff are encouraged to become familiar with this CDC guidance. Please review the “Cleaning and Waste Disposal Recommendations” section of the CDC’s Interim Guidance for information on how to properly clean and disinfect embalming room and instruments.

Benefits of EDRS

In 2019, almost 92,000 or 70% of all deaths were reported through EDRS. EDRS improves the quality and timeliness of death data reporting which is highly critical for public health surveillance, outbreak detection, and public health emergency response.

EDRS Training

For more information on EDRS including training materials and upcoming training webinars, visit the EDRS website at www.doh.pa.gov/edrs.

Contact Information for EDRS User Support and the Death Registry Unit:

By Phone: Vital Events Stakeholder Hotline at 800-323-9613

By Email: EDRS User Account Creation: RA-DHEDRSUSERACCT@pa.gov
EDRS Support: RA-DHEDRS@pa.gov
Death Registration: RA-DHDEATHREG@pa.gov