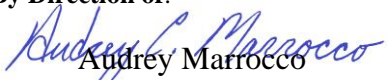


STATE REGISTRAR NOTICE

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| Subject: <i>Guidance for Funeral Directors:</i> COVID-19 Prevention Methods | Type: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Transitory | Number: 2020-09 |
| Date Issued: March 19, 2020 Date Amended: December 11, 2020 | Audience: Funeral Directors | By Direction of:  Audrey Marrocco State Registrar |

In response to the Governor’s COVID-19 Disaster Declaration, the Bureau of Health Statistics and Registries (BHSR) is issuing guidance on the following measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while continuing to provide important services for individuals that die in Pennsylvania.

Text shown in a red font indicates substantial updates to information since the previous date amended, which was October 8, 2020.

Mandatory Electronic Reporting of Deaths

Beginning at 12:00 am on March 20, 2020, funeral directors must report all deaths that occur in Pennsylvania through EDRS. Funeral directors that do not have computers or internet service may submit the [Request for Waiver from Mandatory EDRS Reporting](#) form to seek a waiver from this requirement. Paper “Certificates of Death” will not be accepted unless a waiver has been approved by BHSR.

Funeral homes that have not yet adopted EDRS should register for EDRS accounts as outlined in [SRN 2020-07 – Guidance for Funeral Directors: Establishing an EDRS Account](#). Funeral directors and staff are encouraged to participate in an [online webinar](#) or to self-train by reviewing the [Quick Reference Sheets](#).

At this time, BHSR is not mandating that all medical certifications be submitted through EDRS. However, all [State Registrar Notices](#) issued on the reporting of deaths attributed to COVID-19 remain in effect and must be reported in EDRS by all death reporting stakeholders.

If you are new to EDRS, you should be aware of the following two workflows surrounding the medical portion of the report of death:

1. If the medical certifier is using EDRS, the full report of death will be reported electronically. To get started on these cases, see the following QRSs:
 - [QRS-2000, Finding a Death Case Someone Else Started](#)
 - [QRS-2001, Creating a New Death Case: Personal Information](#); [QRS-2003, Signing a Death Case](#); and [QRS-2010, Requesting Medical Certification](#)

2. If the medical certifier is paper reporting on the Certificate of Death (H105.143) or the [Medical Certification Worksheet \(HD02036F\)](#), the funeral director should follow the fax attestation process. Allow two business days for completion of this step. The fax attestation process is as follows:
 - Create the case in EDRS. See [QRS-2001, Creating a New Death Case: Personal Information](#).
 - Submit a [Fax Cover Sheet for Medical Certification Worksheet](#) and the H105.143 or the MD02036F. Then submit to BHSR by fax at 717-525-5190 or by email at RA-DHEDRSFAX@pa.gov.
 - The funeral home staff may proceed with completing all other necessary steps while BHSR staff are entering the medical information into EDRS. See the list of [Quick Reference Sheets](#) for full instructions.

Disposition/Transit Permits

Once a death case is dropped to paper, the funeral director may immediately print the Disposition/Transit Permit. See [QRS-2055, Printing a Disposition Permit](#). Provide both copies of the Disposition/Permit to the place of disposition. The authorized representative at the place of disposition will retain one copy for their records and send the other one to the local registrar of the district in which the place of disposition is located (if that LR is different than the LR that registered the death). A copy does not need to be provided to BHSR or to the LR that registered the case since both parties have full access to the permit within EDRS.

COVID-19 Mitigation Methods to be Used by Funeral Homes

BHSR is strongly recommending that all funeral homes implement the following measures to mitigate community exposure to COVID-19.

Interviewing of Family Members for the Report of Death

Funeral directors should limit person-to-person interaction while arranging the services for the decedent. Funeral directors are encouraged to use BHSR's [Funeral Director Worksheet](#) to gather information from the informant for the completion of the report of death instead of a person-to-person interaction. This worksheet can be completed by the informant and provided to the funeral director or completed over the phone with the informant. Funeral directors are encouraged to share this worksheet with informants to ease the process in gathering this information while practicing social distancing.

Funeral Services

Funeral or memorial services are an important part of celebrating the lives of deceased loved ones. This service is essential for bringing people together during a period of mourning. **However, for the duration of the [Governor's proclamation of disaster emergency](#) issued March 6, 2020 due to COVID-19 and necessary steps to mitigate the community spread of this disease, it is important that you delay these events or limit attendance, practice social distancing, and adhere to the Secretary of Health's [mandate on universal masking](#). Further, to align with the Governor's guidance for gatherings Pennsylvania, **the Secretary of Health's orders for mitigation and enforcement requirements for events and gatherings also applies to funeral services.****

It is recognized that social distancing is especially difficult during a period of mourning since individuals tend to embrace one another as part of the emotional healing process. However, social distancing and wearing facemasks or face coverings is an important step to protect the health of the service participants and attendees. As such, we strongly encourage you to recognize and implement social distancing practices and adherence to universal masking during the planning of the service.

Encourage families to restrict burial services to only immediate family members and to refrain from physical interactions at these events. Encourage families to hold memorial services to celebrate their loved one after social distancing restrictions are lifted.

Local Registrar Services

The following two important notices apply to local registrar services:

1. Local Registrar (LR) Services at Public Office

For LR services provided at BHSR's Vital Records Offices [view <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/certificates/Pages/Public-Offices.aspx> for locations currently providing in-person services.](#) See [SRN 2020-18](#) for instructions on how to schedule an appointment.

2. Local Registrars Serving Local Registration Districts

As authorized under [SRN 2020-08](#), all local registrars must implement workflows at their locations that limit person-to-person interactions when fulfilling their LR duties. To continue to receive services from your LR, you must comply with the workflow implemented by your LR as authorized under SRN 2020-08.

In addition, SRN 2020-08 authorizes local registrars to request a temporary stay from local registrar duties. BHSR will update the online [Local Registrar Listing](#) to keep you informed of the current status of local registrars.

Funeral directors should check the [Local Registrar Listing](#) prior to selecting a local registrar when registering a death case in EDRS. Once the death case is dropped to paper,

BHSR cannot modify the death case to assign it to another LR. If an LR is selected that is on a temporary stay, the funeral director must submit their [Funeral Home Application for a Death Certificate](#) directly to BHSR for processing.

Death Certificates

Funeral directors may continue to submit their requests to a local registrar. If ordering certificates from BHSR, the following interim measures have been implemented:

1. BHSR is accepting all [Funeral Home Applications for a Death Certificate](#) by fax or email regardless of payment due.
 - Applications should be submitted by email to RA-DHBHSRVETDEATH@pa.gov or by fax at 717-724-6931.
 - If a fee is due, please write “INVOICE REQUESTED” in Part 4 of the application. BHSR will invoice you for these certificates.
 - BHSR reserves the right to request supporting documentation when a quantity that exceeds 10 death certificates is requested under the fee waiver available to members of the U.S. armed forces.
2. BHSR is discouraging funeral homes from applying by mail. If applying by mail, expect a delay in services. In addition, payment by check or money must be submitted with your application prior to release of the certificates.

If a funeral director needs additional death certificates in the 90-day period following the filing date and the LR that registered the death is on a temporary stay, the funeral director should complete the [Funeral Home Applications for a Death Certificate](#) and submit it directly to BHSR for processing. BHSR cannot assign the case to a different LR once the death is registered.

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

Hours of Operation:

Standard Business Hours: 7 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday

Extend Hours During the COVID-19 Pandemic: 7 am to 7 pm, Sunday through Saturday

Contact Information for the Death Certificate Unit

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

By Fax: 717-724-6931

By Email: RA-DHBHSRVETDEATH@pa.gov



Request for Waiver from Mandatory EDRS Reporting

I attest that my facility is unable to utilize EDRS since our facility does not own a computer or have access to internet services. As such, I am requesting authorization to continue reporting deaths using the paper "Certificate of Death" (H105.143) reporting form.

Funeral Home Name(s): _____

Funeral Home License Number(s): _____

Funeral Home Address(es): _____

Funeral Director License Number: _____

Phone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Date: _____

Funeral Director's Name _____

Funeral Director's Signature: _____

This form must be submitted as follows:

By email: RA-DHVITALSTATISTICS@pa.gov

By fax: 717-772-3258

STATE REGISTRAR APPROVAL:

Approved

Disapproved

Response (if applicable): _____

Date: _____

State Registrar's Signature: _____