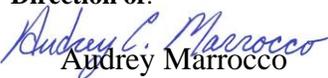


STATE REGISTRAR NOTICE

Subject: <i>Additional Guidance for Funeral Directors: Reporting of Deaths During COVID-19 Disaster Declaration</i>	Type: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Transitory	Number: 2020-11
Date Issued: April 8, 2020 Date Effective: April 8, 2020	Audience: Funeral Directors	By Direction of:  Audrey Marrocco State Registrar

This notice is supplemental information for funeral directors on the reporting of deaths during the COVID-19 disaster declaration.

Mandatory Electronic Reporting of Deaths (EDRS)

Over the last two weeks, the Bureau of Health Statistics and Registries (BHSR) has onboarded over 2,000 EDRS users. As a result, the Department of Health is utilizing near-time death data available through EDRS to support its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Death data is critical for public health purposes. We appreciate your willingness and eagerness to partner with us on the expanded adoption of EDRS.

Mandatory EDRS reporting for deaths attributed to COVID-19 remains in effect for both funeral homes and medical certifiers (including medical professionals¹ and coroners/medical examiners).

In addition, mandatory EDRS reporting remains in effect for funeral homes when reporting all other deaths due to social distancing protocol we have implemented. Paper reporting of deaths is available only to funeral directors who have received an approved “Request for Waiver from Mandatory EDRS Reporting” as outlined in [SRN 2020-09](#).

Funeral homes are notified by fax or email of the status of their waiver once a determination has been made. In addition, BHSR also notifies the funeral home’s LRs of waiver approvals.

Tips on Using EDRS

Avoiding Duplicate Cases:

More cases are now being created by the medical certifier. As such, you are more likely to see a case created in EDRS when you are ready to begin your data entry. See [QRS-2000, Finding a Death Case Someone Else Started](#) for guidance on search techniques you may use to avoid creating a duplicate case. We recommend that you talk to staff at the licensed healthcare facility

¹ A medical professional is defined as a physician, certified registered nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or dentist.

or the coroner's/medical examiner's office to verify the following information before starting the case:

- Exact spelling of the decedent's name *used to create the case*
- Actual date of death
- Gender
- How they will be reporting (on paper or in EDRS)
- Case ID (if they have already created the case in EDRS)

While you are unable to use the case ID until you own the case, the case ID provides you with additional information to verify that you have found the correct case if one already exists. If you create the case and the medical certifier is using EDRS, you may also want to provide them with the above information to assist them in finding the case you have started.

If you create a duplicate case, you will need to abandon the case. Please note that there is no way to merge two different case IDs in EDRS. If a duplicate case is entered, you will need to abandon the duplicate case and re-enter the information on the correct case. See [QRS 2017, Abandoning a Death Case](#).

Fax Attestations:

The fax attestation process is used for cases where the funeral home is reporting in EDRS and the medical certifier is using either the Certificate of Death (H105.143) or the [Medical Certification Worksheet \(HD02036F\)](#) paper reporting forms. Please fax the paper reporting form to 717-525-5190 and we will enter the medical information into EDRS within 2 business days. Once you complete the personal information section of your case, review your entry for errors. Once the information is correct, the funeral director can sign the case. See [QRS 2003, Signing a Death Case](#). Once the case has been signed by a funeral director, the final step in completing a case is to click the Drop to Paper link, which is in the Print Forms section of EDRS. The drop to paper function must be done before a case can be registered.

The drop to paper function also allows the funeral home to generate printed data from EDRS on to a Certificate of Death (H105.143) form. The printing of the H105.143 form is optional and should not be submitted to our office or to a local registrar. For additional information on printing from EDRS, see [QRS 2015, Printing a Working Copy \(Uncertified\)](#).

Modifying Cases:

As soon as you create a case, you have saved information into EDRS. This is a great way to stay organized and to track the information that you still need to collect on the case. You may continue to go into EDRS to update or enter information until the case is registered.

All funeral home staff with EDRS accounts can modify information on the case until the funeral director has signed the case. Once the case is signed, the funeral home staff cannot change any information on the case unless the funeral director unsigns the case. See [QRS-2051, Unsigning a Death Case](#) for more information. Once the correction has been made, the funeral director will need to sign the case again. A case cannot be unsigned once it has been dropped to paper or registered.

Once the case is registered, the funeral director may submit an amendment to the case if it is necessary to update or modify the personal information on the death record. Requests for amendments may only be done by the funeral director that signed the original case. See [QRS 2022-FH, Amending a Death Case](#). BHSR may require additional documentation to support the amendment.

Local Registrar Services

Social distancing workflows are still in place at our local registrar offices. See [SRN 2020-08](#) for full details. Local registrar offices are continuing to accept the following paper reports:

- Reports of Fetal Death (H105.024) – Since there is no electronic registration process for fetal deaths, the Report of Fetal Death must be submitted in paper to your local registrar. Do not submit these cases in EDRS since they will be voided.
 - You may also mail Reports of Fetal Death directly to BHSR for registration at the following address:

PA Department of Health
Bureau of Health Statistics and Registries
Attn: Fetal Death Registry
PO Box 1528
New Castle, PA 16103

- Disposition/Transit Permit (HD01232F) for all fetal death and for funeral directors that have been waived from the mandatory EDRS reporting requirements – Disposition permits for regular reports of death should be downloaded from EDRS after signing the case. See [QRS-2055, Printing a Disposition Permit](#).
- Certificates of Death (H105.143)
 - New deaths reported on H105.143 that are submitted by funeral directors who have obtained an approved waiver from mandatory EDRS reporting.
 - Cases originally registered as “pending investigations”. These reports are considered amendments to the death record on file. Therefore, if the original report of death was completed on the H105.143 form, all amendments to that death record need to remain on paper. Please write the letter “F” (for final) in the upper left corner of the H105.143 form.
- Death Correction Statements H105.135 submitted for a death record originally filed on paper using H105.143.

Local Registrars on Temporary Stays

The option for local registrars to take a temporary stay from duties is still in effect. Download the online [Local Registrar Listing](#) to keep informed of the current status of our local registrars.

Please note that we are also suspending local registrar offices in EDRS while a local registrar is on temporary stay. Therefore, you will not see that local registrar's office in the lookup option in EDRS. While your local registrar is on temporary stay, please order all death certificates directly from BHSR for cases registered by a local registrar that is on temporary stay.

COVID-19 Mitigation Methods to be Used by Funeral Homes

Visit the [CDC's Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) website for guidance on COVID-19 and funerals, including what funeral home workers need to know about handling decedents who died of COVID-19.

We recommend that you start your case in EDRS before you pick up the body when possible. If the medical certifier has started their entry, you will be able to view the medical information that has been entered on the case. If the medical information is not available in EDRS, you may want to reach out to the medical certifier to determine what information is available regarding the cause of death of the decedent.

Please note that BHSR does not manage the sharing of information between medical certifiers and funeral homes other than what has been provided under a report of death. Please refer to 45 CFR 164.512(g) for guidance on the disclosure of decedents protected health information from a covered entity, such as a hospital, to funeral directors.

Death Certificates

Funeral directors may continue to submit requests for death certificates to their local registrar or to BHSR. Death certificates must be ordered from BHSR for cases registered by a local registrar that is on temporary stay.

If requesting death certificates from BHSR, complete the [Funeral Home Applications for Death Certificates](#) and fax it to 717-724-6931 or send by email to RA-DHBHSRVETDEATH@pa.gov. See [SRN 2020-09](#) for full details on how to submit an application to BHSR during the COVID-19 disaster declaration period. To prevent a delay in fulfillment of your application, please submit a copy of your photo ID as listed in Part 3 of the [Funeral Home Applications for Death Certificates](#).

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