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## MY FAMILY MEMBER PASSED AWAY AND WAS TAKEN TO THE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE. WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?

Contact the funeral home of your choice to make funeral arrangements. The funeral home is responsible for conveying your family member and personal [property](#) that was in his/her possession at the time of death.

## CAN I COME TO THE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE TO SEE MY DECEASED FAMILY MEMBER?

Unfortunately, no. The only time viewing of a decedent is permitted is for identification purposes. The Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office does not offer viewing privileges. Viewing is more appropriate in a funeral home.

## MY FAMILY MEMBER WAS TAKEN TO THE CUYAHOGA COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE. WILL AN AUTOPSY BE AUTOMATICALLY PERFORMED?

No. The need for an autopsy is determined by our Forensic Pathologists following the decedent's arrival at the Medical Examiner's Office; however, the next of kin can request that an autopsy be performed.

## IF AN AUTOPSY WAS NOT PERFORMED, HOW IS THE CAUSE OF DEATH DETERMINED?

Body fluid samples are taken and tested in the Toxicology Lab, and the medical history is obtained for our Pathologists to review and determine the cause of death.

## WHAT IS THE COST OF AN AUTOPSY?

If the decedent was a resident of Cuyahoga County, there is no cost to have an autopsy performed.

## MY FAMILY MEMBER PASSED AWAY IN ANOTHER COUNTY, BUT THE AUTOPSY WAS PERFORMED AT THE CUYAHOGA COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE. WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE FOR OBTAINING OUT-OF-COUNTY REPORTS?

While we do provide services for other counties, one must contact that specific county to obtain the reports.

County	Telephone Number
Ashland	(419) 282-6159
Ashtabula	(440) 998-4791 (800) 837-4791
Columbiana	(330) 424-5029
Erie	(419) 625-0654
Geauga	(440) 834-1856 (440) 285-2222
Lake	(440) 350-2789 (800) 899-5253
Lorain	(440) 774-7300
Mahoning	(330) 740-2175
Medina	(330) 483-3135
Portage	(330) 297-3444 (330) 298-2060
Richland	(419) 774-5868
Stark	(330) 837-9299
Trumbull	(330) 675-2516

## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO DETERMINE A DEATH RULING?

This procedure is handled differently by the various Counties. However, in most cases, a signed death certificate will be released by the Medical Examiner in four to six weeks. When there is insufficient information available to complete the death certificate, a "Pending Findings, Facts and Verdict" death certificate enables the funeral services and burial to take place while additional chemical, microscopic slides preparation and examination, and investigation continues. At the culmination of these tests and investigation, the ruling is made based on all available information. A

supplemental death certificate is then issued with the cause of death and ruling which supersedes the "Pending" death certificate.

#### CAN A DEATH CERTIFICATE BE OBTAINED FROM THE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE?

#### WHERE CAN COPIES OF THE DEATH CERTIFICATE BE OBTAINED?

Death Certificates can be obtained from the City of Cleveland Department of Vital Statistics for all communities in Cuyahoga County except for the following communities:

City	Telephone Number
Bedford	(440) 232-1600
East Cleveland	(216) 681-2188
Euclid	(216) 289-2843
Lakewood	(216) 529-7690
Parma	(440) 885-8816
Rocky River	(440) 331-0600
Shaker Heights	(216) 491-1480

Death Certificates for deaths that occurred within the City of Cleveland and cities not listed above can be obtained from:

#### **The City of Cleveland Department of Vital Statistics**

601 Lakeside Avenue E, Cleveland, Ohio 44114  
(216) 664-2315



Order official certificates from vital records below:

[www.vitalchek.com](http://www.vitalchek.com)

#### **Death Records prior to 1909 may be obtained from:**

[The County Archives](#)

2905 Franklin Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio  
(216) 443-7250

#### **Death Records from 1868 to 1908 may be obtained from:**

[Cuyahoga County Probate Court](#)

1 Lakeside Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44113  
(216) 443-8764

## CAN I SPEAK WITH OR MEET WITH THE PATHOLOGIST THAT PERFORMED THE AUTOPSY ON MY FAMILY MEMBER?

Yes, speak to a Medical Secretary at (216) 698-1184 to schedule an appointment with the Pathologist who performed the autopsy. An appointment must be made in advance in order to discuss the case. Business hours are Monday through Friday 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

## WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S REPORT?

Autopsy cases include the verdict, autopsy protocol, and toxicology report. Non-autopsy cases include the verdict and toxicology report.

## WHEN WILL THE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S REPORT BE COMPLETED?

When all test results have been received and reviewed by the Pathologist, all reports have been prepared by the secretarial staff, and approved by the Medical Examiner.

## HOW CAN I OBTAIN A COPY OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S REPORT?

Contact the General Office for information on completion of the report and the cost.

## HOW CAN I GET THE HOSPITAL RECORDS, POLICE REPORT, AND/OR FIRE REPORT SURROUNDING THE DEATH OF MY RELATIVE?

These records are not generated by the Medical Examiner and contain either sensitive or legally protected information that is not generally releasable to anyone except the next of kin or the administrator/executor of the decedent's estate. If you are next of kin, you should contact the General Office directly for such requests. If you are representing the estate, you must have certified written authorization from next of kin or a court order to have access to such records.

## WHEN IS AN AUTOPSY PERFORMED?

Not all persons brought to the Medical Examiner's Office are autopsied. Certain cases are not autopsied where no "foul play" is suspected and evidence of a natural death is present, in other cases where there is the possibility of legal proceedings which may arise as a result of a homicide, accident, suicide. . .an autopsy will be performed. In these cases both positive and negative information is found which substantiates the ruling and cause of death as signed by the Coroner. Under a new change in the Ohio Revised Code, any child under age 2 years that is referred to the Medical Examiner's Office with no known potentially lethal disease shall be autopsied unless contrary to the parent's religious beliefs.

## DOES THE MEDICAL EXAMINER NEED PERMISSION FROM THE NEXT-OF-KIN FOR AN AUTOPSY?

Ohio Law (ORC 2108.52) provides that the Medical Examiner does not need permission for an autopsy. The Office of the Medical Examiner will attempt to comply with the wishes of the next-of-kin, if this does not conflict with the duties of the Medical Examiner as changed by Ohio Law including due regard for the deceased religious persuasion.

## WHAT IS AN AUTOPSY AND IS THERE A CHARGE FOR IT?

An autopsy is a systematic examination by a qualified physician of the body of a deceased person for the purpose of determining the cause of death and recovering, from the body, evidence of the cause of death. A record is made of the findings of the autopsy including microscopic and toxicologic laboratory test. These laboratory tests are conducted after the release of the body to the next-of-kin for burial. There is no charge to the next-of-kin for an autopsy nor for any of the tests, which may be conducted by the Medical Examiner.