



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Bob Wise
Governor

Paul L. Nusbaum
Secretary

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MEMORANDUM

TO: State Medical Examiners
Deputy State Medical Examiners
County Medical Examiners
County Coroners
Assistant Medical Examiners

FROM: Dwayne Combs
Director of Forensic Operations

DATE: October 18, 2002

RE: Death Certificate Protocol

State Medical Examiners, County Medical Examiners, County Coroners, or Assistant County Medical Examiners must, in any case in which they have to complete a death certificate, complete and sign the medical certification portion of the death certificate within forty-eight hours after being notified of the death, as either "pending"(only if a State Medical Examiner) or with the full cause of death statement.

State Medical Examiners, County Medical Examiners, County Coroners, or Assistant County Medical Examiners, at the time of releasing a body to an authorized entity such as a funeral director, must complete and sign the death certificate so as to make it available to the receiving entity.

In any case where autopsy has been performed, but the State Medical Examiner needs to wait for additional studies or investigation in order to determine final cause / manner of death, he or she **must specify the particular pending study or studies on the cause of death portion of the death certificate.**

Upon receiving information sufficient to complete the cause and / or manner of death portion of the death certificate, the medical examiner shall complete the final death certificate within **seven (7)** working days and forward the cause of death to Vital Statistics.