

Question: May NPs sign death certificates?

Answer: Death certificate--contents, filing, locale, duties of certain persons, time allowed--certificate marked presumptive, when:

193.145. 1. A certificate of death for each death which occurs in this state shall be filed with the local registrar, or as otherwise directed by the state registrar, within five days after death and shall be registered if such certificate has been completed and filed pursuant to this section.

2. If the place of death is unknown but the dead body is found in this state, the certificate of death shall be completed and filed pursuant to the provisions of this section. The place where the body is found shall be shown as the place of death. The date of death shall be the date on which the remains were found.

3. When death occurs in a moving conveyance in the United States and the body is first removed from the conveyance in this state, the death shall be registered in this state and the place where the body is first removed shall be considered the place of death. When a death occurs on a moving conveyance while in international waters or air space or in a foreign country or its air space and the body is first removed from the conveyance in this state, the death shall be registered in this state but the certificate shall show the actual place of death if such place may be determined.

4. The funeral director or person in charge of final disposition of the dead body shall file the certificate of death. The funeral director or person in charge of the final disposition of the dead body shall obtain or verify:

(1) The personal data from the next of kin or the best qualified person or source available; and

(2) The medical certification from the person responsible for such certification.

5. The medical certification shall be completed, attested to its accuracy either by signature or an electronic process approved by the department, and returned to the funeral director or person in charge of final disposition within seventy-two hours after death by the physician in charge of the patient's care for the illness or condition which resulted in death. In the absence of the physician or with the physician's approval the certificate may be completed and attested to its accuracy either by signature or an approved electronic process by the physician's associate physician, the chief medical officer of the institution in which death occurred, or the physician who performed an autopsy upon the decedent, provided such individual has access to the medical history

of the case, views the deceased at or after death and death is due to natural causes. The state registrar may approve alternate methods of obtaining and processing the medical certification and filing the death certificate. The Social Security number of any individual who has died shall be placed in the records relating to the death and recorded on the death certificate.

6. When death occurs from natural causes more than thirty-six hours after the decedent was last treated by a physician, the case shall be referred to the county medical examiner or coroner or physician or local registrar for investigation to determine and certify the cause of death.

If the death is determined to be of a natural cause, the medical examiner or coroner or local registrar shall refer the certificate of death to the attending physician for such physician's certification. If the attending physician refuses or is otherwise unavailable, the medical examiner or coroner or local registrar shall attest to the accuracy of the certificate of death either by signature or an approved electronic process within thirty-six hours.

7. If the circumstances suggest that the death was caused by other than natural causes, the medical examiner or coroner shall determine the cause of death and shall complete and attest to the accuracy either by signature or an approved electronic process the medical certification within seventy-two hours after taking charge of the case.

8. If the cause of death cannot be determined within seventy-two hours after death, the attending medical examiner or coroner or attending physician or local registrar shall give the funeral director, or person in charge of final disposition of the dead body, notice of the reason for the delay, and final disposition of the body shall not be made until authorized by the medical examiner or coroner, attending physician or local registrar.

9. When a death is presumed to have occurred within this state but the body cannot be located, a death certificate may be prepared by the state registrar upon receipt of an order of a court of competent jurisdiction which shall include the finding of facts required to complete the death certificate. Such a death certificate shall be marked "Presumptive", show on its face the date of registration, and identify the court and the date of decree.

(L. 1984 S.B. 574, A.L. 1989 S.B. 389, A.L. 1997 S.B. 361, A.L. 2005 S.B. 74 & 49)