

THE ROLE OF THE CORONER/ MEDICAL EXAMINERS OFFICE

After a death, there is an agency in your local community responsible for investigating the death. The agency in your community may be called the Coroner's Office or the Medical Examiner's Office (ME Office). While specific policies and procedures differ from location to location across the country the following information will be a starting point for you to understand how the agency responsible in your area works. Please contact your local Coroner's or Medical Examiner's Office in your area for specific information.

1. In most areas the Coroner's Office/ME Office is required by law to investigate all unnatural deaths or deaths where an attending doctor has been unable to state a cause of death. This investigation is not limited to examination of the deceased but may include interviews with family members and others.
2. An autopsy will be performed only in cases where it is required by law or where it is necessary to determine the cause of death.
3. An autopsy is an examination of the deceased by a medical doctor. This examination is a surgical procedure that is carried out with the utmost professionalism and within the standards of competent medical practice.
4. You can usually obtain a copy of the autopsy report when it's available by calling you Coroner/ME office.
5. The mortuary you chose will work with the Coroner's Office/ME Office to arrange the release of your loved one from the Coroner/ME to the mortuary.
6. The coroner/ME examination should not delay your funeral plans.
7. The "cause of death" of your loved one may not be determined until after toxicology results which could take up to 3 or 4 months.
8. Copies of death certificates can be obtained from your chosen mortuary.