**Medical Examiner Cases**

**Policy Statement**

Residents in long-term care settings generally pass away from natural causes; however, in certain circumstances, resident deaths must be reported by law to the medical examiner for a potential autopsy. This policy and procedures establish guidelines based on Iowa law that a resident death would be referred to the county medical examiner

**Procedures**

The following circumstances are considered reportable to the county medical examiner:

* A person’s death which affects the public interest shall be reported to the county medical examiner or the state medical examiner by the physician in attendance, any law enforcement officer having knowledge of the death, the embalmer, or any other person present. The appropriate medical examiner shall notify the city or state law enforcement agency or sheriff and take charge of the body. A death affecting the public interest includes but is not limited to:
  + Violent death, including homicidal, suicidal, or accidental.
  + Death caused by thermal, chemical, electrical or radiation burn.
  + Death caused by criminal abortion including self-induced, or by sexual abuse.
  + Death related to the disease thought to be virulent or contagious which may constitute a public hazard.
  + Death that has occurred unexpectedly or from an unexplained cause.
  + Death of a person confined in a prison, jail, or correctional institution.
  + Death of a person who was prediagnosed as a terminal or bedfast case who did not have a physician in attendance within the preceding thirty days; or death of a person who was admitted to and had received services from a hospice program, if a physician or registered nurse employed by the program was not in attendance within thirty days preceding death.
  + Death of a person if the body is not claimed by a person authorized to control the deceased persons remains, or a friend.
  + Death of a person if the identity of the deceased is unknown.
  + Death of a child under the age of two years if death results from an unknown cause or if the circumstances surrounding the death indicate that sudden infant death syndrome may be the cause of death.
  + Death of a person committed or admitted to a state mental health institute, a state resource center, the state training school, or the Iowa juvenile home.

**Resources:**

[Iowa Code § 331.802](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/2022/331.802.pdf)