



Collin County Medical Examiner

FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SHEET

One of our top priorities is to make sure the families we work with are given resources that may be needed during a difficult time. This information sheet provides families with frequently asked questions, websites and phone numbers to various resources. We hope this provides a little direction when faced with an unexpected loss.



Why is my loved one being taken to the Medical Examiner's office?

People are brought to the Medical Examiner's Office because it is required by law that certain deaths, by any sort of violence, sudden and unexpected death, unattended by a physician, trauma or if the identity of the deceased is unclear. The medical examiner is responsible for determining cause and manner of death.

Who is legal next-of-kin?

Collin County Medical Examiner's office follows the governance of the Texas Health & Safety Code Section 711.002 to determine the legal next-of-kin for the purposes of disposition of remains. The law outlines the following persons in order of succession:

- A person designated in a written instrument signed by the decedent;
- The decedent's surviving spouse or common law spouse;
- Any one of the decedent's surviving adult children;
 - Either one of the decedent's surviving parents;
 - Any one of the decedent's surviving adult sibling; or
 - Any adult person in the next degree of kinship in the order named by law to inherit the estate of the decedent.

Will I have to pay for Medical Examiner's services?

There is no charge to family for an examination performed by our office.

What should legal next-of-kin do now?

The legal next-of-kin must decide on a funeral home and notify their funeral director that the death is being handled by the Collin County Medical Examiner's Office. Once a funeral home has been decided, we require the legal next-of-kin to call and speak with an investigator or administrative staff. They must verbally designate a funeral home. Our agents will then facilitate a time to release the decedent with the funeral home. *We do not require paperwork to be submitted*

Do you have my loved one's personal property?

Our office only collects the personal property found on the individual's person at the time of their death. Personal property not required for examination as part of Law Enforcement investigation will be released to the funeral home and returned to you.

Can I come to view my loved one?

We do not arrange viewing at our facility. The funeral home would be the appropriate location to view your loved one's remains. In general, identifications are made by circumstantial evidence and may be confirmed through fingerprinting, comparison of radiographs, or DNA.

What type of examination is being performed on my loved one?

Each case is unique and is evaluated on an individual basis. There are three types of examinations that are performed: external examinations, complete autopsy or head only autopsy. An external exam is performed to confirm outward physical signs of disease and to verify the absence or existence of injury. Complete autopsies are the external and internal examination to determine or confirm internal physical injury or illness, effects of disease, or in some cases, to collect evidence. In most cases, toxicology will be done.

How long will it take to determine cause and manner of death?

Each case varies depending on what testing, specialized medical consultation, or additional investigation is required. Some cases can be classified at exam, some in a few weeks, but others may take several months.

How can I receive death benefits if the cause and manner of death are pending?

A "pending" death certificate will be available to you. The "pending" death certificate is still legal proof of death. Please verify with your insurance agencies and financial institutions if this form of death certificate will suffice.

How do I obtain a death certificate?

A death certificate can be obtained through your selected funeral home or from the local registrar designated to where the death occurred.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Assistance Center of Collin County
972-422-1850
www.assistancecenter.org

Children's Advocacy Center of Collin County
972-633-6600
www.caccollincounty.org

Crime Victims' Compensation Program – Office of the Attorney General
800-983-9933
www.texasattorneygeneral.gov

Family Law Hotline
800-777-3247

Family Violence Legal Hotline
800-347-4673

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-7233

Mothers Against Drunk Drivers
214-585-4616
www.madd.org

Suicide Crisis Center
214-828-1000
www.sccenter.org

Texas Department of Criminal Justice – Victim Services
800-848-4284
www.tdcj.texas.gov

Texas Youth Hotline
800-989-6884

VINE
877-894-8463
www.vinelink.com

Collin County District Attorney-
Victims' Assistance Division
972-548-4435