

VITAL STATISTICS SECTION (VSS)

DEATH REGISTRATION HANDBOOK



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

This handbook describes death reporting and registration in Texas. The system of record is the Texas Electronic Vital Events Registrar (TxEVER).

A death certificate is a permanent legal record of an individual's death and is extremely important to the family of the deceased person. The death certificate provides important personal information about the decedent and about the circumstances and causes of death. The death certificate is used to apply for benefits, close accounts, and settle estates, among other purposes. A death certificate provides evidence of the fact of death and can be produced as evidence in a court of law.

The death certificate provides important information on mortality that is used in a variety of medical and public health-related research efforts. Mortality statistics derived from death certificates identify leading causes of death and help evaluate public health programs and clinical interventions. These statistics are used to assess the general health of Texas citizens. Mortality statistics help identify diseases found among specific groups of people and determine where medical research may have the greatest impact on reducing mortality. Statistical information is used to allocate resources and to follow the course of infectious diseases.

Because mortality statistics are no more accurate than the information submitted on death certificates, it is very important that all death certificates be completed and filed with accuracy and promptness.

The Vital Statistics Section (VSS) Field Services team is a primary point of contact for training and support. Field Services should be outreached with vital statistics questions and requests for training. See <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vital-statistics/vital-statistics-partners/field-services> for more information.

All DSHS application forms are located for the general public at <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vital-applications-forms> and for partners at <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vital-statistics/vital-statistics-partners/partner-forms>.

Registration Requirements

A Certificate of Death (VS-112) must be filed electronically in TxEVER within ten days of the date of death for every death in Texas by either the person in charge of interment or disposition, or the person in charge of removing the body from the registration district for disposition. [HSC §193.002, §193.003(a)]

The funeral director, or person acting as such, shall obtain an electronically filed report of death through TxEVER or complete a report of death before transporting the body. The report of death shall be, within 24 hours of assuming custody of the body, transmitted to the local registrar of the district in which the death occurred or in which the body was found. A copy of the completed or electronically filed report of death as prescribed by the Vital Statistics Section (VSS) shall serve as authority to transport or bury the body within this state. [25 TAC §181.2(a)]

When arrangements for disposition of a body are made through a funeral home, a death certificate should be completed and filed by the funeral director. When a body has been donated to a hospital, medical school, or mortuary school for scientific or educational purposes, the institution is responsible for completing and filing the death certificate. When arrangements for the disposition of a body are made by a family member with no participation from a funeral home, the family member completes and files the death certificate with the assistance of a local registrar of the county where the death occurred or where the body was found.

Responsibilities of the Funeral Director or Person Acting as Such

Death registration requires a cooperative effort between the funeral director or person acting as such; the medical certifier of the cause of death, which may be the physician who attended the deceased, the medical examiner, or the justice of the peace, depending on the circumstances of the death; and the informant who provides personal, non-medical information about the deceased.

The Funeral Director or Person Acting as Such is responsible for:

- Filing a Report of Death with the local registrar within 24 hours of assuming custody of the body. [25 TAC §181.2(a)]
- Obtaining the cause of death information from the attending physician, physician assistant, advanced practice registered nurse, the medical examiner, or the justice of the peace as appropriate based upon the circumstances of the death.
- Securing all necessary signatures on the certificate.
- Reviewing the certificate for completeness and accuracy.
- Filing the death certificate in TxEVER within ten days of death. [HSC §193.003(a)]
- Using all necessary permits and other forms associated with the death registration process such as the Burial Transit Permit and the Disinterment Permit.

- Cooperating with the Vital Statistics Section (VSS) and local registrars regarding inquiries about death certificate entries.
- Contacting VSS or the local registrar for guidance and assistance as needed.

The funeral director or person acting as such should notify the medical examiner (ME) or justice of the peace (JP) for investigation or inquest and cause of death certification, if law enforcement or someone else has not already done so, if the death was from external causes and/or if any of the circumstances listed in Chapter 2 exist for deaths certified by an ME or JP. [HSC §193.005, CCP Art. 49.25 Sec. 6, CCP Art. 49.04]

Confidentiality of Information

The fact of death (name, sex, date of death, county of death) of an individual is public information; however, the death certificate is not. A death certificate is a confidential record for the first 25 years after the date of death and may be released only to a properly qualified applicant [HSC §191.051; GC Sec.552.115].

Penalties

It is a Class A misdemeanor for a person to knowingly reveal or induce another to reveal confidential information from a death certificate. It is a Class C misdemeanor for a person to refuse or fail to furnish any information in the person's possession affecting a death certificate. It is also a Class C misdemeanor for a person to fail, neglect, or refuse to fill out and file a death certificate, with the local registrar or deliver the certificate upon request to the person with the duty to file it. It is a third-degree felony to falsely obtain, use, or alter a certificate of death with a fine of up to \$10,000 and 2-10 years in prison. [HSC §195.003, §195.004, §195.005]

Chapter 2 – Certifying Death

General Information

The medical certifier is responsible for providing the date and time of death and completing the medical certification section of the death certificate. In this role, the medical certifier provides the final act of patient care, closure for the family with a complete and accurate death certificate, and service to the community by providing important public health data. The certifier must complete the medical certification not later than five days after receiving the death certificate or provide notification to the funeral director, or person acting as such, explaining the reason for the delay. [HSC §193.005(b) - (g)]

Circumstances of death determine who may medically certify the cause and manner of death on the death certificate. For a Texas Certificate of Death, an attending physician, physician assistant or advanced practice registered nurse of the decedent may complete the medical certification for natural causes. [HSC §193.005(a) – (b)] If the manner of death is accident, suicide, homicide, unknown, or undetermined, the justice of the peace (JP) or medical examiner (ME) should be called immediately. Physicians, physician assistants, and advanced practice registered nurses must not certify these types of death. The certifier's degree or title should be indicated on the certificate.

Death certificates must be filed within ten days from the date of death. If a lengthy investigation or autopsy needs to be performed by the JP or ME, the death certificate should be filed as "Pending Investigation." A death certificate with a pending cause of death can be used to close accounts, among other things. Upon receipt of autopsy results, or other information that could change the information in the medical certification on the certificate, the JP or ME should immediately amend the certificate.

The individual who pronounces death at the scene may not necessarily be the same person that certifies the death on the death certificate.

If the manner of death is natural, the attending physician should be called immediately. If the attending physician is the personal family physician, he or she may be the best source of information regarding the cause of death in cases where the death is due to natural causes. The personal physician may have knowledge of pre-existing medical conditions. The personal physician may certify the death to the best of his or her knowledge even if he or she did not pronounce the death or had not seen the patient for some time.

Sometimes, the attending physician does not know why the person died and/or simply refuses to certify the death certificate. The certifier should be assured that the cause of death is his or her best medical opinion. If additional information becomes available later, a medical amendment can always be filed at no charge.

An associate physician, the chief medical officer of the institution where the death occurred, or the physician who performed an autopsy on the decedent may complete the medical certification for a death from natural causes if:

- The attending physician, the physician assistant, or the advanced practice registered nurse of the decedent is unavailable and approves; and
- If the medical certifier has access to the decedent's medical history [§193.005(c)]

The funeral director may ask for assistance from the family, local registrar, or justice of the peace to expedite certification. If all else fails, the funeral director should call the medical examiner or justice of the peace immediately.

Deaths Certified by the Medical Examiner or the Justice of the Peace

Deaths must be referred to the presiding medical examiner or justice of the peace under the following circumstances.

For counties served by a medical examiner:

Code of Criminal Procedure Art. 49.25 Sec. 6. Death Investigations

- (1) When a person shall die within twenty-four hours after admission to a hospital or institution or in prison or in jail;
- (2) When any person is killed; or from any cause dies an unnatural death, except under sentence of the law; or dies in the absence of one or more good witnesses;
- (3) When the body or a body part of a person is found, the cause or circumstances of death are unknown, and:
 - (A) the person is identified; or
 - (B) the person is unidentified;
- (4) When the circumstances of the death of any person are such as to lead to suspicion that he came to his death by unlawful means;
- (5) When any person commits suicide, or the circumstances of his death are such as to lead to suspicion that he committed suicide;
- (6) When a person dies without having been attended by a duly licensed and practicing physician, and the local health officer or registrar required to report the cause of death under Section 193.005, Health and Safety Code, does not know the cause of death. When the local health officer or registrar of vital statistics whose duty it is to certify the cause of death does not know the cause of death, he shall so

notify the medical examiner of the county in which the death occurred and request an inquest;

(7) When the person is a child who is younger than six years of age and the death is reported under Chapter 264, Family Code; and

(8) When a person dies who has been attended immediately preceding his death by a duly licensed and practicing physician or physicians, and such physician or physicians are not certain as to the cause of death and are unable to certify with certainty the cause of death as required by Section 193.004, Health and Safety Code. In case of such uncertainty the attending physician or physicians, or the superintendent or general manager of the hospital or institution in which the deceased shall have died, shall so report to the medical examiner of the county in which the death occurred, and request an inquest.

For counties served by a justice of the peace:

Code of Criminal Procedure Art. 49.04. Deaths Requiring an Inquest

(a) A justice of the peace shall conduct an inquest into the death of a person who dies in the county served by the justice if:

(1) the person dies in prison under circumstances other than those described by Section 501.055(b), Government Code, or in jail;

(2) the person dies an unnatural death from a cause other than a legal execution;

(3) the body or a body part of a person is found, the cause or circumstances of death are unknown,

and:

(A) the person is identified; or

(B) the person is unidentified;

(4) the circumstances of the death indicate that the death may have been caused by unlawful means;

(5) the person commits suicide or the circumstances of the death indicate that the death may have been caused by suicide;

(6) the person dies without having been attended by a physician;

(7) the person dies while attended by a physician who is unable to certify the cause of death and who requests the justice of the peace to conduct an inquest; or

(8) the person is a child younger than six years of age and an inquest is required by Chapter 264, Family Code.

(b) Except as provided by Subsection (c) of this section, a physician who attends the death of a person and who is unable to certify the cause of death shall report the death to the justice of the peace of the precinct where the death occurred and request that the justice conduct an inquest.

(c) If a person dies in a hospital or other institution and an attending physician is unable to certify the cause of death, the superintendent or general manager of the hospital or institution shall report the death to the justice of the peace of the precinct where the hospital or institution is located.

(d) A justice of the peace investigating a death described by Subsection (a)(3)(B) shall report the death to the missing children and missing persons information

clearinghouse of the Department of Public Safety and the national crime information center not later than the 10th working day after the date the investigation began.

Deaths Certified by the County Judge

The county judge is notified regarding a death if a justice of the peace is not available to conduct an inquest. The county judge should be notified only in cases that require an inquest. Under these circumstances, the county judge has the authority to sign the death certificate as the certifier only if a justice of the peace is still unavailable. [CCP Art 49.07(C), CCP Art. 49.16]

Unidentified Persons

The justice of the peace investigating the death of an unidentified person whose body is found, and the cause or circumstances of death are unknown, shall report the death to the Missing Children and Missing Persons Information Clearinghouse of the Department of Public Safety and the National Crime Information Center within ten working days [CCP Art. 49.04(d)].

The physician who performs a postmortem examination on the body of an unidentified person shall complete and file a death certificate. The physician shall note on the certificate the name of the law enforcement agency that submitted the body for examination along with the case number. A copy of the certificate should be sent to the Missing Children and Missing Persons Information Clearinghouse within ten working days of the date the physician files the certificate. [CCP Art. 63.018]

Found Remains

A timely filed death certificate can be only filed within one year of the actual or approximated date of death, or the date found. The date the remains were found would be listed as the date of death. If the death occurred over one year before the remains were found, a Court-Ordered Delayed Certificate of Death should be filed [HSC §193.007].

Instructions for Completing a Certificate of Death

The Texas death certificate (VS-112, revised 4/2009) must be filed electronically, as specified by the state registrar, by the person in charge of interment or disposition, or by the person in charge of removing the body from the registration district for disposition [HSC §193.002]. In addition, the person completing the medical certification shall submit the information and attest to its validity using the

electronic process specified by the state registrar. [HSC §193.005(h)]. This electronic process is TxEVER.

Each item is to be completed following the specific instructions for that item. Abbreviations should be avoided, except for those suggested in the item-by-item specific instructions. The spelling of all names should be verified with the informant.

Sometimes, parties may provide conflicting information regarding the deceased for the death certificate. For example, the informant may state that the deceased is married, but the family says otherwise. Or there may be a conflict as to who will be listed as the surviving spouse. In these cases, the funeral director can ask for documentation or list the information provided by the informant because he or she is the funeral home customer. The funeral director has a statutory obligation to file the death certificate on time. If necessary, conflicting parties can resolve their argument through the court system after the death certificate has been registered.

Chapter 3 – Death Certificate Item-by-Item Definitions

The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidelines for entering the items that are listed on a death certificate. The numbers that are listed to the right, following each data item, are the item numbers from the Texas death certificate VS-112 form. TxEVER is the system of record used to report deaths in Texas. There are edit checks in TxEVER, including null and consistency checks, to ensure quality death reporting. Each item is to be completed following the specific instructions for that item.

To promote complete and quality reporting, TxEVER contains system edit checks that are resolved by completing information and tabbing from item to item in the system. If an item remains highlighted in yellow after tabbing off the item, completion is required.

TxEVER also contains security controls as mandated by the state of Texas for government systems containing confidential records, including disabling user accounts after 90 days of inactivity.

For instructions on how to report a death in TxEVER go to:

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vs/field/TxEVER/guides.aspx>

General Information

Record Type

- Identified – The name of the decedent is known.
- Unidentified – The name of the decedent cannot be determined.

Decedent’s Legal Name (Include AKAs If Any) (First Middle Last) (1)

This is the full legal first, middle, and last name of the decedent. While the medical certifier will enter the decedent’s name into TxEVER to assist in reporting, the funeral director or person acting as such is responsible for the information as it prints on the death certificate. The name is not abbreviated. If there appears to be more than one spelling of any name provided and the correct spelling cannot be verified, use the most common spelling. The name must consist of English alphabetic characters and punctuation marks.

Enter the two first names with the middle name blank. If several middle names are given, enter them into the middle name field with a space between the names.

- If the informant indicates two first names separated by a space, such as “Mary Louise Carter”, verify that “Louise” is part of the first name and is not a middle name.

- If the decedent's identity is not known, "John Doe" or "Jane Doe" is appropriate with an investigation case number.
- If there is a title preceding the name, such as "Doctor," the title is specified in the Prefix field of the record in TxEVER Demographic Tab 1.
- For religious names such as "Sister Mary Lawrence", enter "Sister Mary" in the first name field.
- If the decedent was an infant and no first name is provided, "Infant" is the first name.

Initials:

- If the informant indicates that the decedent used a first initial such as "E. Charles Jones", try to obtain the whole first name.
 - If the name can be obtained, the whole first name is entered. If not, enter just the initial followed by a period.
- If the informant indicates two initials and a surname such as "H.S. Green", determine if these are a first and middle initial, or two first initials with no middle name or initial. Try to obtain the whole name(s).
 - If the names can be obtained, enter the whole names in the appropriate spaces. If there are no whole names, enter the initials in the appropriate spaces. Each initial should be followed by one period.

Aliases: An alias or AKA ("also known as") should be entered into the AKA section in TxEVER by clicking the orange plus sign. Complete the current legal name before entering any alias that the decedent used. The alias should only be listed if it is substantially different from the decedent's legal name (e.g., Samuel Langhorne Clemens AKA Mark Twain, but not Jonathon Doe AKA John Doe). Repeat until there are no other names provided. Note that multiple AKAs will not all print on the death certificate due to space limitations.

An AKA does not include:

- Nicknames, unless used for legal purposes.
- Spelling variations of the first name.
- Presence or absence of middle initial.
- Presence or absence of punctuation marks or spaces.
- Variations in spelling of common elements of the surname, such as "Mc" and "Mac" or "St." and "Saint".

The legal name of the deceased is used to identify the decedent. This is the most important item on the certificate for legal and personal use by the family. There are alternate spellings to many names, and it is critical for the family to have the name spelled correctly.

Date of Death (2)

Date of Death Type

Select one of the following options:

- Actual – The definitive date of death according to available information.
- Presumed – The assumed date of death when the actual date is unknown due to either missing information or a missing person.
- Estimated – The exact date of death is not known but can be approximated based on documentation.
- Found On– The date when remains were discovered. This is when a body has been found after an extended period and time of death cannot be estimated or presumed.
- Court Determined – The date as determined by court.

Presumed, Estimated, Found On, and Court Determined are used primarily by medical examiners and justices of the peace.

Date of Death

The date of death is determined by the medical certifier. Enter the date, in standard order of “month, day, year,” when the death occurred. Enter an 8-digit numeric value (mm/dd/yyyy example: 01/15/2021).

Consider a death at midnight to have occurred at the start of a new day. The date for a death that occurs at midnight between December 31 and January 1 should be recorded as January 1.

Decedent’s Sex (3)

If sex (Male or Female) cannot be determined after verification with medical records, inspection of the body, or other sources, select Unknown or Not yet determined.

Decedent’s Date of Birth (4)

This is the month, day, and year that the decedent was born. If unknown, enter a question mark.

Age (5)

Enter the decedent’s exact age in years – no fractions - at the last birthday.

If the decedent was under one year of age:

- Enter the age at the time of death in either completed months or days.

- If the infant was 1-11 months inclusive, enter the age in completed months. For responses such as “almost 4 months,” enter “3” in the Months box.

If under 1 day: For infants who did not survive for an entire day, enter the exact number of completed hours or minutes the infant lived in the appropriate block. (Example: The decedent lived 3 and 17 minutes. You would enter 3 hours)

- If the infant lived 1-23 hours inclusive, enter the age in completed hours.
- If the infant was less than 1 hour old, enter the age in minutes.
- If the infant lived only a few seconds, enter one minute.

If the body is found and the exact date of death is not known, enter the age the person would have been on the date he or she was found.

Decedent’s Birthplace (City & State or Foreign Country) (6)

If the decedent was born in the United States, enter the name of the city, county, and state. If the decedent was born in the United States, and state is unknown, select United States from the state/country dropdown and select Unknown for county and city.

If the decedent was born in a foreign country, click on the checkbox in TxEVER to search for the country. Scroll down until the country is found. Select it. City and county are not required and do not print if the decedent was born outside the United States, and you would tab off these fields to resolve any checks.

If no information is available regarding the place of birth, click on the checkbox in TxEVER as if searching for a country. Scroll to the bottom. Select Unknown.

Decedent’s Social Security Number (7)

Enter the social security number (SSN) of the decedent. There is a check in TxEVER to verify the SSN with the Social Security Administration.

All social security numbers are exactly nine (9) digits (XXX-XX-XXXX). Special attention should be given to entering the correct social security number.

If the decedent did not have a social security number, click on the Social Security Missing Value Variable. This allows one to specify why no SSN is available. If the decedent has no SSN, select “None.” If the decedent’s SSN is not known, select “Unknown.”

Decedent’s Marital Status at The Time of Death (8)

Select the marital status of the decedent at the time of death from the following options:

- Married
- Widowed (and not remarried)
- Divorced (and not remarried)
- Never Married
- Unknown

Common-law marriage is legal in Texas and is considered “Married.” A person is legally married even if separated. A person is no longer legally married only after a divorce has been granted by a judge or after the death of the spouse.

“Annulled and not remarried” and “never previously married” are considered Never Married. “Married previously” is classified as how the previous marriage terminated (Widowed or Divorced).

If a married couple is killed at the exact same time, “Married” should be selected on each death certificate and Surviving Spouse should be completed with the name of the spouse. This situation may occur in an automobile accident.

If the medical examiner or justice of the peace can determine different times of death, these items would be completed according to the time of death. The first to die would be listed as "Married" and the second as "Widowed."

Surviving Spouse’s Name (9)

If the decedent was married at the time of death, enter the full name of the surviving spouse.

Provide the maiden name or name prior to first marriage for the spouse. This is the name given at birth or adoption, not a name acquired by marriage.

Decedent’s Residence Address (10)

The residence of the decedent (State, county, city, and street address) is the place where his or her household is located, the place where the decedent resided, or where the person lived and slept most of the time. This is not necessarily the same as the home state, voting residence, mailing address, or legal residence.

Do not enter addresses that are post office boxes or rural route numbers. Get the building number and street name for the residence address rather than the postal address.

Temporary residence: Do not enter a temporary residence, such as one used during a visit, business trip, or a vacation. However, usual onshore place of residence during a tour of military duty is not considered temporary and should be entered as the place of residence on the certificate. Similarly, usual place of residence during attendance at college is not considered temporary and should be entered as the place of residence on the certificate.

Multiple residences: If the decedent lived in more than one residence (parent living in a child's household, children in joint custody, person owning more than one residence, or commuters living elsewhere while working), enter the residence lived in most of the year. If a child lived an equal amount of time in each residence, report the residence where the child was staying when death occurred.

Institutions or Group Homes: If a decedent had been living in a facility where an individual usually resides for a long period of time, such as a group home, mental institution, nursing home, penitentiary, or hospital for the chronically ill, long-term care facility, congregate care facility, foster home, or board and care home, this facility should be entered.

Children: If the decedent was a child, the residence is the same as that of the parent(s), legal guardian, or custodian unless the child was living in an institution where individuals usually reside for long periods of time, as indicated above. In those instances, the residence of the child is shown as the facility. Children residing at a boarding school are considered to live at a parent's residence. Residence for foster children is the place they live most of the time.

Infant: If the decedent was an infant who never resided at home, the place of residence is that of the mother or legal guardian. Do not use an acute-care hospital as the place of residence for an infant.

Street Address

Enter the number and street name of the place where the decedent lived. If the street name has a direction as a prefix, enter the prefix in front of the street name (e.g., South Main Street). If the street name has directions after the name, enter the direction after the name (e.g., Florida Avenue, NW). Report the street designator (e.g., Street, Road, Avenue, or Court). If the number and/or name are unknown, enter Unknown.

Apt

Enter as needed.

State/Country

Select the name of the State in which the decedent lived. This may differ from the State in the decedent's mailing address. If the decedent was a resident of the United States, and state is unknown, select United States from the state/country dropdown and select Unknown for county and city.

If the decedent was not a resident of the United States, click on the checkbox in TxEVER to select a country.

County

Enter the name of the county in which the decedent lived. If the decedent resided in any country other than the United States and its territories, leave this item blank.

City/Town

Enter the name of the city, town, or location in which the decedent lived. This may differ from the city, town, or location in the decedent's mailing address.

Zip Code

Enter the zip code of the place where the decedent lived. This may differ from the zip code in the decedent's mailing address. If the zip code is unknown, because county and city are unknown, enter five 9's for the zip code.

Inside City Limits

Select Yes if the location entered for the City/Town is incorporated and if the decedent's residence is inside its boundaries. Otherwise select No. If it is not known if the residence is inside the city or town limits, select Unknown.

Father/Parent 2 Name Prior to First Marriage (11)

Mother/Parent 1 Name Prior to First Marriage (12)

In the title dropdown menu, select one of the following:

- Mother
- Father
- Parent

Enter the name of the decedent's parent prior to first marriage. This is the name given at birth or adoption, not a name acquired by marriage. This name is useful because it remains constant throughout life.

- If there appears to be more than one spelling of any name provided, and the correct spelling cannot be verified, use the most-common spelling.
- The name must consist of English alphabetic characters.
- If no information is available regarding the parent's name, leave the first and middle name blank. In the last name field, enter "Unknown".

Place of Death (13 - 16)

The place where death is pronounced should be considered the place where the death occurred.

If the death occurred in a hospital, hospice, or a long-term care facility, select the full name of the institution from the Place of Death dropdown. Contact the TxEVER Help Desk if an institution needs to be added to the Place of Death table. If death did not occur in an institution, give the street address of the place of death.

Hospital Death

If the decedent was pronounced dead in a hospital, select the decedent's status at the Hospital: Inpatient, Emergency Room/Outpatient (ER), or Dead-on Arrival (DOA).

If the death occurred en-route to, or on arrival at, a hospital, enter the full name of the hospital. Deaths that occur in an ambulance or emergency squad vehicle en-route to a hospital are in this category, and Hospital-Dead on Arrival would be selected in TxEVER.

Death Occurred Somewhere Other than a Hospital

If the decedent was pronounced dead somewhere else, enter whether pronouncement occurred at a Hospice facility, Nursing home/Long term care facility, Decedent's home, or other location.

Hospice

Hospice facility refers to a licensed institution providing hospice care (e.g., palliative and supportive care for the dying), not to hospice care that might be provided in a number of different settings, including a patient's home.

Long-Term Care Facility

If death was pronounced at a licensed long-term care facility, select Nursing home/Long term care facility for Type of Place. A long-term care facility is not a hospital but provides patient care beyond custodial care (e.g., nursing home, skilled nursing facility, long-term care facility, convalescent care facility, extended care facility, intermediate care facility, residential care facility, and congregate care facility).

Decedent's Home

If death was pronounced in the decedent's home, select decedent's home for the type of place. A decedent's home includes independent living units like private homes, apartments, bungalows, and cottages.

- Enter the house number and street name.
- If there is no house number and street name, describe the location. For example, "Hwy 30, 2 miles east of FM 29". Be specific. Do not enter a rural route and box number.

Place of Death is Other than Described Above

If the death occurred at a place other than described above, select Other (Specify) and enter the number and street name of the place or describe the location; for example, "Hwy. 30, 2 miles east of FM 29." Be specific. Do not enter a rural route and box number.

If Other (Specify) is selected, specify where death was pronounced, such as licensed ambulatory/surgical center, birthing center, prison ward, physician's office, the highway where a traffic accident occurred, a vessel, orphanage, group home, or at work.

If the death occurred in a moving vehicle in the United States and the body was first removed in Texas, complete a Texas death certificate and enter as the place of death the address where the body was first removed from the vehicle.

For a death occurring either at sea or in flight, and the body was first removed in Texas, complete a Texas death certificate listing the county where removed, and enter the name of the vessel or flight and the latitude or longitude where the event occurred; for example, "SSA Everett Hill at sea 29d 18m N 94d 48m W" or "Global Airlines Flight 263 in flight 30d 18m N 97d 42m W." It is also important that the certificate contain some citation of the page and volume number of the craft's log.

If the place of death is unknown, enter the place where the decedent was found.

Informant's Name & Relationship to Deceased (17)

Enter the name of the person who supplied the personal facts about the decedent and his or her family. The informant is usually a member of the family or close family friend.

Enter the relationship to the decedent of the person supplying the personal information about the decedent. For example, this may be a husband, wife, parent, son, daughter, brother, sister, or friend of the decedent.

At times, the funeral director may be the informant and has to obtain personal information from a physician, a hospital official, or medical records. In some cases, information will be obtained from the police. "Funeral Home Records" or "Inquest Records" may be the informant when an individual is not available.

Informant's Mailing Address (18)

Enter the complete mailing address of the informant. Be sure to include the zip code.

Verification of Death Facts has been signed

Select the box in TxEVER if the Verification of Death Facts has been signed by the informant after reviewing all the demographic information listed. The Verification of Death Facts must be printed before the box can be selected.

Method of Disposition (19)

Select the method of disposition of the decedent's body.

Burial – The body is placed into the ground.

Cremation – The body is turned into ashes. If the decedent is being cremated, then entombed or buried, select "Cremation" as the method.

Donation – The body is to be used by a hospital, medical, or mortuary school for scientific or educational purposes. Donation refers only to the entire body, not to individual organs.

Entombment – The body is placed in a burial chamber.

Mausoleum – The body is placed in a stone building with places for tombs.

Removal from State – The body is being removed or shipped out of Texas for burial or other disposition.

Other – None of the above categories. If "Other" is selected, then specify the method of disposition.

Signature of and License of Funeral Director or Person Acting as Such (20)

When the death certificate is electronically filed in TxEVER by the funeral service licensee assuming custody of the body and charged with the responsibility for completing the death certificate, this space will contain the funeral director's name and license number.

Burial Details (21)

Enter the appropriate information for Section, Block, Lot and Space (niche) to indicate the location of the burial plot. If the cemetery has no designation of the actual location, Unknown must be selected.

- If the cemetery has some designation such as Section, but no Block, Lot, or Space, enter the Section information and tab through TxEVER fields intended to be left blank.

- When designating the location of cremains that are placed in a columbarium, use the spaces in this item that closely match. The columbarium may not designate specific locations in the same manner described on the death certificate. For example, wing, section, row, lot, space, niche, etc.
- If the cremains are given to the family for disposition, select “Unknown”.

Place of Disposition (22-23)

Enter the name of the cemetery, crematory, or other place of disposition.

- If the body is removed from the State, specify the name of the cemetery, crematory, funeral home, or other place of disposition to which the body is shipped.
- If the body is cremated and the cremains are to be permanently entombed or buried, enter the name of the cemetery, mausoleum, columbarium, or location where the cremains will be permanently placed.
- If the cremains are given to the family for disposition, enter only the name of the crematory.
- If the body is to be used by a hospital or medical or mortuary school for scientific or educational purposes, give the name of that institution.
- If the body is being shipped to a foreign country, select Other for Place of Disposition Type, specify the Place of Disposition, and click on the checkbox in TxEVER to search for the country. Scroll down until the country is found. Select it.

Name and Address of Funeral Facility (24 – 25)

Enter the name of the funeral facility.

If the body is to be used by a hospital, medical, or mortuary school for scientific or educational purposes, enter the name of that institution.

The address should automatically populate in TxEVER with the funeral facility's address. If this is the first record you are completing in TxEVER, review that information to ensure that the information is correct.

Name and Address of Filing Funeral Facility

This information is entered only if the funeral home is filing on behalf of another funeral home.

Education (43)

Select the decedent's highest degree or level of school completed at the time of death. If the decedent was currently enrolled, select the previous grade or highest degree received. If information is unknown, select "unknown/not stated".

Decedent of Hispanic Origin? (44)

Select the option that best describes whether the decedent is Spanish/Hispanic/Latino. Select only one response. Select "No" if the decedent is not Spanish/Hispanic/Latino. If the decedent's Hispanic designation is not listed, select the "Yes, Other" box and enter the decedent's Hispanic origin on the (Specify) line.

Each question, Race and Hispanic Origin, should be asked independently. "Hispanic" is not a race, and a decedent of Hispanic origin may be of any race (White, Black or African American, Native American, etc.). "Hispanic" is a self-designated classification for people whose origins are from Spain, the Spanish-speaking countries of Central or South America, the Caribbean, or those identifying themselves generally as Spanish or Spanish-American. Origin can be viewed as ancestry, nationality, or country of birth of the person or person's parents or ancestors prior to their arrival in the United States. Although the prompts include the major Hispanic groups, other groups may be specified under "Other."

If the informant does not know or does not provide, select "Unknown".

Decedent's Race (45)

Enter the race or races of the decedent as stated by the informant. Each question, Race and Hispanic origin, should be asked independently. If there is no box for the informant's response for one or more race, check the box "Other" and enter the informant's literal (written) response even if the response is not a race or race(s). Do not make assumptions.

American Indian and Alaska Native refer only to those native to North and South America (including Central America) and does not include Asian Indian. Please specify the name of enrolled or principal tribe (e.g., Navajo, Cheyenne, etc.) for the American Indian or Alaska Native.

For Asians and Pacific Islanders, enter the national origin of the decedent. For Asians check Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, or specify other Asian group; for Pacific Islanders check Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, or specify Other Pacific Islander.

If more than one race is indicated, enter each race (e.g., Samoan-Chinese-Filipino or White, American Indian).

If the informant does not know or does not provide, select "Unknown".

Decedent Ever in US Armed Forces (46)

Select "Yes" if the decedent was ever in any of the U.S. Armed Forces; if not, select "No". If it is not known that the decedent was in the U.S. Armed Forces, select "Unknown". This item is used to identify decedents who were veterans.

If "Yes", then specify:

- Is the decedent reported to have been in such service?
- Name of organization in which service was rendered.
- Serial number of discharge papers or adjusted service certificate?
- Name of next of kin or of next friend?
- Post office address (this would be the mailing address of the next of kin or next of friend).

Ever a peace officer in this State (47)

Select "Yes" if the decedent was a peace officer in the state of Texas. If the decedent was never a peace officer in Texas or was a peace officer in another state, select "No".

Decedent's usual occupation (48)

For decedents aged 14 years and over, enter the usual occupation of the decedent. This means the type of job the individual was engaged in for most of his or her working life. It is not necessarily the highest-paid job, nor the job considered the most prestigious, but the one occupation, of perhaps several, that accounted for the greatest number of working years. For example, usual occupation may be a claim adjuster, farmhand, janitor, store manager, college professor, or civil engineer. Enter the information even if the decedent was retired, disabled, or institutionalized at the time of death.

Never enter "Retired".

If the decedent was a homemaker at the time of death but had worked outside the household during his or her working life, enter that occupation.

If the decedent was a "homemaker" during most of his or her working life, and never worked outside the household, enter "Homemaker".

Enter "Student" if the decedent was a student at the time of death and was never regularly employed or employed full time during his or her working life.

If not known, enter "Unknown".

Type of Business/Industry (49)

For decedents aged 14 years and over, enter the type of business or industry to which the decedent's usual occupation relates (e.g., farming, legal, hardware store, retail clothing, university, government, etc.). Do not enter the name of the firm or organization who employed the decedent.

If "Homemaker" is entered as the decedent's usual occupation, enter "Own Home" or "Someone else's Home", as the type of business/industry, whichever is appropriate.

If "Student" is entered as the decedent's usual occupation, enter the type of school as the type of business/industry. Do not enter the name of the school. For example, enter "high school" or "college", not "South City High School".

If not known, enter "Unknown".

Medical Certifier Information

Certifier – Type, Name, Address, Title (26, 31, 32)

A funeral home should have firm knowledge of who will sign the death certificate as medical certifier before assuming custody of a body.

In TxEVER, under the "Record" menu, select "Designate Medical Certifier" and specify from the dropdown if a certifier is a physician, physician's assistant, advanced practice registered nurse, medical examiner, justice of the peace, or county judge.

The name, title, license number, office name, and address of the certifier automatically populates in TxEVER, once the medical designation has been accepted.

Signature of Certifier (27)

When the death certificate is electronically signed in TxEVER by the medical certifier, who is certifying to the cause and manner on the death certificate, this space on the death certificate contains the Medical Certifier's name.

Date Certified (28)

TxEVER automatically completes this portion of the record when the medical certifier electronically certifies (signs) the death certificate. The certifier has five days from the time he or she receives the death certificate to complete the medical certification [HSC Sec. 193.005(b)].

Date and Time of Death

Date of Death (2)

Enter the exact month, day, and year that death occurred. Enter the date, in standard order of "month, day, year", when the death occurred. Enter an 8-digit numeric value (mm/dd/yyyy example: 01/15/2021).

Consider a death at midnight to have occurred at the start of a new day. The date for a death that occurs at midnight between December 31 and January 1 should be recorded as January 1.

Time of Death (30)

Enter the exact time of death in hours and minutes when the death occurred. Use prevailing local time. If daylight-saving time is the official prevailing time when death occurs, it should be used to record the time of death. Be sure to indicate whether the time of death is A.M. or P.M. Enter 12 Noon as "12:00 P.M." One minute after 12 Noon is entered as "12:01 P.M." Enter 12 Midnight as "12:00 A.M." A death that occurs at 12 Midnight belongs to the start of a new day. One minute after 12 Midnight is entered as "12:01 A.M." of the new day.

Time of Death Type

Specify one of the following options:

- Actual - The definitive time of death according to available information.
- Presumed - The assumed time of death when the actual time is unknown due to missing information or a missing person.
- Estimated - The exact time of death is not known but can be approximated based on documentation.
- Found - The time at which remains were discovered. This is usually when a body has been found after an extended period and time of death cannot be estimated or presumed.

Note: Do not confuse this item with the time of pronouncement. This item establishes the exact time of death.

Cause of Death (33)

Cause of death is the most important public health item on the death certificate. It provides medical information that serves as a basis for describing

trends in health and mortality and for analyzing the conditions leading to death. Mortality statistics provide a basis for epidemiological studies that focus on leading causes of death by age, race, and sex. They also provide a basis for research in the course of diseases and diagnostic techniques, which in turn can lead to improvements in patient care. These mortality data are valuable to physicians because they can be used for research and influence funding, which may impact clinical practice.

The cause of death is the medical certifier's best medical opinion; as a result, it may vary among individual certifiers. A properly completed cause of death section provides an etiological explanation of the order, type, and association of events resulting in death.

The underlying cause of death is defined as a) the disease or injury that initiated the chain of morbid events leading directly to death or b) the circumstances of the accident or violence that produced the fatal injury.

The cause of death section on the death certificate has two parts.

- Part I is for reporting the causal sequence of events leading to death, in reverse chronological order, starting with the final disease or condition that immediately preceded death (list on line a) and working backwards to the underlying cause. Each condition listed in Part I should have caused the condition listed on the line above it.
- Part II is for reporting other significant conditions that contributed to the death but did not lead to the underlying cause.

In cases of doubt, it is acceptable to use qualifying phrases like "probable" or "possible" in Part I or Part II to reflect uncertainty about which conditions led to death. In cases where the certifier is unable to establish a cause of death based on reasonable medical certainty, "Unknown" may be reported. However, this should be done only after all efforts have been made to determine the cause of death. An autopsy should be performed, if possible. If additional medical information or autopsy findings are later available and change the cause of death, then a medical amendment must be submitted to amend the death certificate.

For justices of the peace and medical examiners: If any portion of the cause of death is pending investigation, select the "Cause of Death is Pending" check box in Medical tab 2 (or enter "Pending" or "Pending Investigation" in Part I, line a) and file the certificate immediately. Upon determination of the cause of death, an Amendment to Medical Certification of Certificate of Death should be filed.

Cause of Death – Part I

Enter the diseases, injuries, or complications that directly caused death in Part I. They should be listed as a sequence of chronological events, listing in line a, the immediate cause of death that directly came before death, and then work backwards to the underlying cause. Each condition in Part I should have caused the condition listed in the line above it. The underlying cause should be listed on the lowest used line, as it is the disease or injury that started the sequence of events leading directly to death.

Do not enter a mechanism or mode of dying such as cardiac or respiratory arrest, shock, or heart failure. Do not use parenthetical statements, abbreviations, or diagnostic codes when reporting the cause of death. Using all four lines is not required. If more than four lines are needed, writing "due to" between conditions on the same line is acceptable. Do not use Part II to continue the sequence.

Immediate Cause [a]

Enter on line a, the disease or condition immediately preceding death. The immediate cause is the final disease or condition directly causing death. Do not leave this line blank. The immediate cause does not mean the mechanism or mode of dying such as cardiac or respiratory arrest, shock, or heart failure. Line a can be the only line completed in Part I if that condition is the only condition causing the death.

Conditions Leading to Immediate Cause [b, c, d]: Due to (or as a consequence of)

If applicable, report on line b the disease, injury or complication that gave rise to the immediate cause listed on line a.

Sequentially list conditions, if any, leading to the immediate cause of death in reverse order with the condition listed on the lowest used line being the underlying cause that initiated the events resulting in death.

The underlying cause should be reported on the lowest used line in Part I. No entry is necessary on lines b, c, and d if the immediate cause of death on line a describes completely the sequence of events.

Approximate Interval: Onset and Death

Provide the best estimate of the interval between the onset of each condition and time of death. When a precise estimate is not possible, do not leave the space blank. Entries such as "minutes," "hours," "days," "months" or "years" are useful. If no estimate is possible, enter "Unknown."

Cause of Death – Part II

Enter in Part II other important diseases or conditions that were present at the time of death and contributed to death but did not lead to the underlying cause of death given in Part I. Separate conditions with a comma or semicolon.

Autopsy Information

Was an Autopsy Performed? (34)

Select "Yes" if a partial or complete autopsy was performed; otherwise, select "No." Note: An autopsy is important in giving additional insight into the conditions that led to death.

Were Autopsy Findings Available to Complete Cause of Death? (35)

Was there was not an Autopsy Performed select "No", TxEVER will automatically disable this question, and it will be left blank on the death certificate. Select "Yes" if the autopsy findings were available and used to determine the cause of death.

Manner of Death (36)

Select the option corresponding to the manner of death. Deaths not due to external causes should be identified as Natural. **Physicians, physician assistants, and advanced practice registered nurses will only select Natural.**

General definitions from the National Association of Medical Examiners – A Guide for Manner of Death Classification:

- Natural - due solely or nearly totally to disease and/or the aging process.
- Accident - there is little or no evidence that the injury or poisoning occurred with intent to harm or cause death. In essence, the fatal outcome was unintentional.
- Suicide - results from an injury or poisoning as a result of an intentional, self-inflicted act committed to do self-harm or cause the death of oneself.
- Homicide - occurs when death results from a volitional act committed by another person to cause fear, harm, or death. Intent to cause death is a common element but is not required for classification as Homicide. The classification of Homicide for the purpose of the death certificate is considered "neutral" and neither indicates nor implies criminal intent.
- Undetermined or Could Not Be Determined - used when the information pointing to one manner of death is no more compelling than one or more other competing manners of death when all available information is considered.

- Pending investigation - used when determination of manner depends on further information and should be amended later to one of the other manners of death.

Deaths not due to external causes should be identified as "Natural".

If the cause of death is anything other than natural, the medical examiner or justice of the peace should be notified immediately. In general, when death involves a combination of natural processes and external factors, preference is given to the non-natural manner of death.

Did Tobacco Use Contribute to Death? (37)

Select from the following options:

- Yes
- No
- Probably
- Unknown

Select "Yes" if any use of tobacco contributed to the death. Tobacco use may contribute to deaths due to a wide variety of diseases; for example, tobacco use contributes to many deaths due to emphysema or lung cancer and some heart disease and cancers of the head and neck. Tobacco use should also be reported in deaths due to fires started by smoking. Select "No" if tobacco use did not contribute to this particular death.

If Female, Pregnancy Status (38)

Select from the following options:

- Not pregnant within past year
- Pregnant at time of death
- Not pregnant, but pregnant within 42 days of death
- Not pregnant, but pregnant within 43 days to 1 year before death
- Not applicable
- Unknown if pregnant within past year

If the decedent was female, indicate whether she was pregnant within the year before death. **Do NOT select "Pregnant at time of death" if the decedent was not pregnant at time of death.** Studies have established over-reporting in this response. If the female was not pregnant within the last year, or it is unknown, then select "Not pregnant within past year" or "Unknown if pregnant within past year."

This information is critical for identifying maternal deaths and will assist with maternal mortality review programs. Medical certifiers should verify the pregnancy status and obstetric history within the past year for all female decedents of reproductive age, regardless of the cause of death. Possible sources of this information include, but are not limited to, medical records, laboratory tests, family interviews, clinical history, and autopsy reports. If pregnancy or its management caused death, words associated with pregnancy should appear in Part I of the cause of death. If pregnancy or its management contributed to (but did not directly cause) death, words associated with pregnancy should appear in Part II.

Injury Fields (Required for Accidents, Homicides, and Suicides) – For Medical Examiners and Justices of the Peace Only

If Transportation Injury, Specify (39)

Specify the role of decedent (e.g., driver, passenger, pedestrian) in the transportation accident, if applicable. Driver/operator and passenger should also be designated for modes other than cars, such as motorcycles. "Other" applies to watercraft, aircraft, animal (riding horseback), or people attached to outside of vehicles (e.g., "surfers") who are not passengers or drivers.

Date and Time of Injury (40 a, b)

For any injury, enter the month, day, and year that the injury occurred. The date of injury might not be the same as the date of death. Enter the time in hours and minutes when the injury occurred. Use prevailing local time. Be sure to indicate whether the time of injury was A.M. or P.M.

In cases where the exact date cannot be determined, both date of injury type and time of injury type include options for - presumed, estimated, and found on - that can be selected when the actual date and time of injury are not known.

Place of Injury (40 c – 40 f)

Injury at Work

Select "Yes" if the injury occurred at work. Otherwise select "No." An injury may occur at work regardless of whether the injury occurred in the course of the decedent's "usual" occupation.

Examples of injury at work:

Injury while working or in vocational training on job premises

Injury while on break or at lunch or in parking lot on job premises
Injury while working for pay or compensation, including at home
Injury while working as a volunteer law enforcement official
Injury while traveling on business, including to or from business contacts

Examples of injury not at work:

Injury while engaged in personal recreational activity on job premises
Injury while a visitor (not on official work business) to job premises
Homemaker working at homemaking activities
Student in school
Working for self for no profit (mowing yard, repairing own roof, hobby)
Commuting to or from work

Place of Injury

Enter the general type of place (such as restaurant, vacant lot, baseball field, construction site, office building, or decedent's home) where the injury occurred. DO NOT enter firm or organization names. (For example, enter "factory," not "Standard Manufacturing, Inc.")

Location of Injury

Enter the complete address where the injury took place, including county, city, and zip code.

Note: This may be different than the location of death.

Describe How Injury Occurred (41)

Briefly and clearly describe how the injury occurred, explaining the circumstances or cause of the accident or injury, such as "fell off ladder while painting house," "ran off roadway," or "car/truck collision."

Specify type of disaster, type of drug, type of gun, or type of vehicle, when relevant to the circumstances of injury and death. If known, indicate what activity the decedent was engaged in when the injury occurred (e.g., playing a sport, working, hanging out at a bar).

NOTE: If the death is related to a disaster, indicate the disaster on the death certificate in the cause of death and injury sections. Directly related disaster deaths occur when caused by the forces of the disaster or are a direct consequence of the forces. These deaths are not natural and will be certified by a medical examiner or justice of the peace. Indirectly related disaster deaths occur when the disaster led to unsafe or unhealthy conditions or a loss or disruption of usual services that

contributed to the death and should also be indicated. Whether a disaster was directly or indirectly related, include the disaster name and type on the death certificate.

An alert will be placed on TxEVER to inform certifiers that the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has begun disaster mortality surveillance and will include the specific disaster name and type to use when filing certificates for disaster-related deaths. For justices of the peace and medical examiners, the Disaster Mortality Surveillance Form is provided to ensure disaster-related deaths are being reported and should be completed any time there is a disaster-related death.

Chapter 4 – Related Death Documents

Report of Death

The funeral director or person acting as such, who assumes custody of a dead body or fetus, shall obtain an electronically filed report of death through a Vital Statistics Section system or complete a report of death before transporting the body. The report of death shall within 24 hours of assuming custody be mailed, faxed, or otherwise transmitted to the local registrar of the district in which the death occurred or in which the body was found.

A copy of the completed or electronically filed report of death as prescribed by the Vital Statistics Section shall serve as authority to transport or bury the body or fetus within this state. [25 TAC §181.2(a)]

The report of death is available from TxEVER at any time after the death record was created. It is also available on the DSHS website under Partner Forms.

Burial Transit Permit

If a dead body or fetus is to be removed from this state, transported by common carrier within this state, or cremated, the funeral director, or person acting as such, shall obtain a Burial-Transit Permit from the local registrar where the death certificate is or will be filed, or from the state registrar electronically through the VSS electronic registration system (TxEVER). The registrar shall not issue a Burial-Transit Permit until a certificate of death, completed in so far as possible, has been presented. [25 TAC §181.2(b)]

“Completed in so far as possible” means that the name of the deceased, date of death, place of death, sex, date of birth, social security number (if known), funeral home, and funeral director’s information should be completed. A certifier should be identified for completing the medical portion of the death certificate. It is the responsibility of the funeral director, or person acting as such, to file a completed death certificate for registration. If an incomplete death certificate is used to obtain the Burial-Transit Permit, the local registrar may wish to confirm the body is no longer needed by the medical certifier before issuing the permit.

A Burial Transit Permit (BTP) cannot be automatically approved and printed from TxEVER until a medical certifier has been designated in the system and that medical certifier has listed the manner of death as natural. Neither the medical certifier, nor the funeral director, is required to electronically sign the record in TxEVER for the BTP to be printed.

For natural deaths, Burial Transit Permits can be printed by the funeral home in TxEVER. Where manner of death is not natural, the funeral home will need to go to

the local registrar office to obtain or electronically route the request in TxEVER for local registrar review and approval. The BTP can be reviewed and printed in the Local Burial Transit Permit Queue in TxEVER. The local registrar office is responsible for working with the presiding medical examiner (ME) or justice of the peace (JP) and establishing their procedures for issuing BTPs. Please work with your local registrar office on their specific procedures for issuing BTPs. Be sure to work closely with your ME or JP and funeral homes so that all parties understand the BTP procedure in your district.

With the implementation of TxEVER, a local registrar may now accept a copy of the Facts of Death Verification from the system to issue a Burial-Transit Permit manually.

A Report of Death cannot be used for cremation. A Burial-Transit Permit or death certificate indicating cremation must be obtained for cremation, in addition to authorization from the medical examiner or justice of the peace. An authority to cremate form is available on the DSHS website under Partner Forms. A local registrar may issue another Burial-Transit Permit if the method of disposition has changed from donation to final disposition.

In counties served by a medical examiner, before a dead body, upon whom an inquest is authorized by the provisions of this Article, can be lawfully cremated, an autopsy shall be performed thereon as provided in this article, or a certificate that no autopsy was necessary shall be furnished by the medical examiner. Before any dead body can be lawfully cremated, the owner or operator of the crematory shall demand and be furnished with a certificate, signed by the medical examiner of the county in which the death occurred showing that an autopsy was performed on said body or that no autopsy thereon was necessary. [CCP Art. 49.25 Sect. 10]

In counties where justices of the peace conduct death inquests, only deaths that are under inquest require a cremation authorization from the JP before a crematory can cremate. [CCP Art. 49.09 (b)] You will need to work with the local officials to determine if the death is subject to investigation or not.

The body of a deceased person shall not be cremated within 48 hours after the time of death as indicated on the regular death certificate, unless the time requirement is waived in writing by the county medical examiner or in counties not having a county medical examiner, a justice of the peace [HSC §716.004].

A Burial-Transit Permit issued under the law and rules of a place outside of this state in which a death occurred authorizes the transportation of the body in this state. A cemetery or crematory shall accept the permit as authorization for burial, cremation, or other disposal of the body in this state. [HSC §193.008(a)]

Burial-Transit Permits may be issued at any time. Each local registrar shall appoint a deputy registrar. A registrar should always be available for the registration of vital records. [HSC §191.022(c)] Local registrars shall make provisions for the issuance of a Burial-Transit Permit after hours, during weekends, and on holidays.

Funeral homes may need Burial-Transit Permits to expedite the shipment of a decedent by common carrier within Texas or to ship out to another location at times other than during normal local registrar business hours. Some local registrar offices make arrangements with their police departments to issue Burial-Transit Permits or assign phones to their staff for funeral homes to contact them when they need a permit outside normal business hours. Since access to the permit is limited and the local registrar keeps track of issuance, it is not advisable to give blank permits to funeral homes. It is up to the local registrar to establish his or her after-hours procedure, but every effort must be made to accommodate funeral homes needing an after-hours Burial-Transit Permit. Please contact the local registrar for information on how to obtain a Burial-Transit Permit during non-business hours and holidays.

Transporting a Body to a Foreign Country

Mexico

To ship a body from Texas to Mexico, a Burial-Transit Permit, a certified copy of the Texas Certificate of Death, and an Apostille from the Texas Secretary of State's Office are generally required. In addition, the funeral director or person acting as such may need to have the death certificate and Apostille translated into Spanish. Then the body may be shipped to Mexico in accordance with specific local custom at the point of entry.

The purpose of an Apostille is to authenticate a document so that it will be accepted in a foreign country. The Texas Secretary of State has the authority to prepare an Apostille for any document created within the state's jurisdiction, including a Texas Certificate of Death.

Please contact the Texas Secretary of State's office for more information regarding Apostille.

Countries Other Than Mexico

To ship a body from Texas to a country other than Mexico, the funeral director or person acting as such should check with the consulate of that country for specific requirements. If the body is removed from Texas, a Burial-Transit Permit must be obtained.

If a letter of non-communicable disease is needed, contact the local registrar office to assist in obtaining this letter from a local health authority of the county to transport a body out of the country.

Expedited Death Certificate for Religious Purposes in Certain Counties

Per Health and Safety Code 193.0025, death certificates may be expedited within 48 hours for religious purposes in counties with an office of medical examiner whose county commissioners court passed a resolution for an expedited process.

An individual must submit a written request for an expedited death certificate to the funeral home or other person required to file a death certificate. The written request must meet the following requirements:

1. Expedited completion is necessary for religious purposes.
2. The decedent's remains will be laid to rest in a foreign country.
3. The requestor is authorized to obtain a death certificate.

The funeral home, or other person required to file a death certificate, shall provide an official death certificate to the requestor within 48 hours of receiving the request, unless an inquest will be conducted for the decedent.

To support the expedited process, a medical examiner may complete the medical certification for deaths due to natural causes, if they have access to the medical history relevant to death and the death occurred in their county.

A funeral home must order one death certificate in TxEVER to release the record for automatic registration by the state. The local registrar will then accept the record and issue the expedited death certificate to the funeral home. The death certificate ordered in TxEVER will be issued by the state within regular processing times.

Disinterment Permits

The disinterment permit issued by the state registrar shall serve as the authority to disinter, transport by means other than a common carrier, and re-inter a body within this state. [25TAC §181.6(h)]

If the body is buried, then later disinterred, and will be removed from this state, transported by common carrier within this state, or cremated, a Burial-Transit Permit must also be obtained. The local registrar may issue Burial-Transit Permits in conjunction with the Disinterment Permits issued from the state when the body

is buried in his or her registration district, but the death certificate was filed in another state.

If the body is to be disinterred and reinterred in the same cemetery, a disinterment Permit is not required. [25TAC §181.6(d)]

A disinterment permit is not required to remove cremated remains. Cremation is considered final disposition of remains. [25TAC §181.6(e, f)]

The Application for a Disinterment Permit (VS-271/271.1), must be signed by the funeral director or embalmer making application for the permit. The sole responsibility for obtaining the consent of the cemetery, the owner of the plot, and the deceased's next-of-kin rests with the funeral director or embalmer making application for a Disinterment Permit. The application, consent forms, and fee must be sent to VSS. The application is available on the DSHS website. Funeral homes may submit applications for disinterment permits electronically in TxEVER for the death records they reported electronically.

Chapter 5 – Amendments

Introduction

Once a death record has been registered, it can only be changed or corrected through the amendment process. An original record or entry cannot otherwise be altered [HSC §191.028]. The amendment is attached to the original record. All amendments are completed at the state only.

A copy of the completed amendment to the Certificate of Death will be forwarded to the local registrar of the registration district where the death occurred.

Demographic Amendments

The demographic information on the death certificate (typically provided by the funeral home) may be amended using the VS-172 Correcting a Death Certificate application. The application is available on the DSHS website.

Funeral homes may also submit amendments electronically in TxEVER for deaths they have reported.

Note that only the original informant may amend the marital status of the deceased without a court order. If the informant is unable or unwilling to request this change, a court of competent jurisdiction may make the determination of the marital status of the deceased in the following situations and have the death certificate amended:

- A party claims he or she is the surviving spouse and is not listed as such,
- Two or more parties claim to be the surviving spouse, or
- The record shows the deceased to have been divorced, never married, or widowed and no surviving spouse is listed, and a party is claiming to be the surviving spouse.

Medical Amendments

To correct information on the medical portion of the death certificate (Items 2 (Date of Death), and 30 (Time of Death) – 41 (Describe How Injury Occurred), or to report the cause and manner of death for a certificate that was filed as "Pending" or "Pending Investigation," an Amendment to Medical Certification of Certificate of Death (VS-174) must be completed through TxEVER for electronic records and on paper for manual records. A medical amendment must be filed to change medical information, including the cause and manner of death.

A medical amendment may be filed any time after the original death certificate was registered. The amendment may be completed and submitted by any medical certifier from the facility who reported the death. If an inquest was conducted by a

medical examiner or justice of the peace, the person conducting the inquest may sign the medical amendment if the death was originally certified by a physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse.

There is no fee for filing an Amendment to Medical Certification of Certificate of Death.

For instructions on filing a medical amendment electronically in TxEVER, please go to: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vs/field/TxEVER/guides.aspx>

Download: Medical Amendments

Chapter 6 – Delayed Registration of Death

A death certificate must be filed within 10 days of death. A Delayed Certificate of Death may be filed only upon judicial order by the county probate court in the county in which the death occurred for individuals who died in Texas but who did not have a death certificate filed within one year from the date of death. [HSC §193.007] Deaths within one year of death are to be filed electronically in TxEVER even if more than ten days have elapsed since the date of death.

The Court-Ordered Delayed Certificate of Death (VS-128) must be supported by the following affidavit(s):

Affidavit A must be signed by either the:

- Physician last in attendance, or funeral director who buried the body, or
- If the affidavit of the physician or funeral director cannot be obtained:
 - Any person who was acquainted with the facts surrounding the death when the death occurred.

Affidavit B must also be signed when:

- Affidavit A is signed by someone other than the physician or funeral director. In these cases, Affidavit B is signed by a person acquainted with the death facts but not related to the deceased by blood or marriage.

VSS shall furnish to the court the Court-Ordered Delayed Certificate of Death (VS-128) form, which is on archival paper, for filing records under this section. All items must be completed on the VSS-furnished archival VS-128 form. If information is not known, enter "Unknown." The probate court may require additional supporting documents.

If the county probate court approves the registration of the court-ordered delayed death, the court will prepare the Court-Ordered Delayed Certificate of Death (VS-128) form in duplicate. The court should forward one original certificate to VSS for registration and the other original to the local registrar. The state registrar may accept the certificate as verified by affidavits in accordance with HSC §193.007. The delayed record is not registered until the state registrar shall register the order (VS-128), which is the record of death.

If a court-ordered delayed death certificate is found to be in error, application for correction of the record must be made to the probate court approving the original registration. Upon receipt of satisfactory evidence supporting the requested correction, the probate court will prepare an Amendment to Delayed Certificate of Death (VS-124.1) which will be forwarded to VSS, who will attach it to the original

record. A copy of the amendment will also be filed behind the record filed by the local registrar.

Appendix A – VSS Resources

TxEVER Assistance

- Contact the [TxEVER Helpdesk](#) or call 1-888-963-7111 (Press 1 for English, then Press 2 for TxEVER).

Field Services

- **Phone:** 512-776-3010
- **Fax:** 512-776-7538
- **E-Mail:** fieldservices@dshs.texas.gov

TxEVER Partners Page

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vital-statistics/vital-statistics-partners>

TxEVER User Guides/Videos

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/vital-statistics/vital-statistics-partners/txever-guides-videos>

Appendix B – CDC National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Resources

National Vital Statistics System Handbooks and Guides for Birth and Death Registration:

- Physician’s Handbook on Medical Certification of Death
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvss/handbook/2023-Physicians-mcod-handbook.pdf>
- Funeral Director’s Handbook – Death Registration and Fetal Death Reporting
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvss/handbook/2019-Funeral-Directors-Handbook-508.pdf>

Department of State Health Services Vital Statistics

[***http://dshs.texas.gov/vs***](http://dshs.texas.gov/vs)