

What is my next step?

You should select a funeral home to make final arrangements. The funeral home representative and the Medical Examiner's Office will coordinate with each other in order to facilitate these arrangements and to eliminate possible delays.

Which deaths *must* be examined?

The Medical Examiner is required by law to investigate all deaths (1) that occur outside a physician's care; (2) that are sudden or unexpected; (3) that cannot be ascertained to be a natural death by documented medical history and circumstances. The involvement of the Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) does **not** mean that an autopsy will automatically be performed. The MEO may take jurisdiction over an apparently natural death if (1) the death was unexpected and no medical cause can be determined; (2) the decedent was not under the care of a physician, and/ or there is no prior documented medical history to explain the death; (3) the death might be a public health hazard; (4) there are extenuating and/ or suspicious circumstances associated with the death.

What is an autopsy and is it really necessary?

An autopsy is the examination of the body to determine cause and manner of death. It is similar to a surgical procedure. Often, an autopsy can reveal an undiagnosed disease process or abnormality. It may also detect a genetic disorder that could be inherited by surviving family members. In an accidental death, the question of how a disease process contributed to the accident (if at all) must be answered. Often insurance companies will deny payment of benefits until the autopsy results are available. If the death is due to apparent natural causes and there is sufficient evidence of a pre-existing illness or medical condition, an autopsy may not be necessary. However, if there is any question that the death may be due to "other than natural causes" an autopsy will be performed. In an

obviously traumatic death, the cause of death may appear obvious; however there may be contributing, underlying factors. Again, the insurance companies may deny benefits until they receive the autopsy results.

What if I disagree with the MEO's decision to do or not to do an autopsy?

Colorado law (CRS 30-10-606) provides the authority for the MEO to perform an autopsy as part of an investigation. We use the following guidelines:

1. If the autopsy is deemed unnecessary for the investigation, it will not be performed. By law, an autopsy cannot be performed by the MEO solely for "medical curiosity." If the family or doctor would like a medical curiosity autopsy to be performed, it must be arranged by the family or by the doctor with the family's permission, and be done by the Pathologist of your choice. You should be aware that the financial responsibility falls upon the requesting party and an autopsy can be quite expensive.
2. If the MEO deems it necessary to perform an autopsy as part of the investigation, the law grants us the ability to take jurisdiction of the body to perform the autopsy. There is no charge for an autopsy conducted under these circumstances.
3. If you or your family should disagree with our decision to perform an autopsy in spite of the benefits and the questions it will answer, you must obtain a Court Order through your attorney to prevent the autopsy from taking place. All legal financial obligations incurred are your responsibility.

How do I obtain the clothing, personal effects, and other items taken into evidence?

All personal property is released with the body to

the funeral home to be given back to the family following an autopsy. The exceptions are as follows:

1. In suicides, if a weapon is involved, separate arrangements for its release must be made through the MEO.
2. If a crime was committed by or against the decedent (homicide), all clothing and personal effects are generally retained as evidence by the investigating law enforcement agency.
3. In all cases, the decedent's Driver's License or similar photo ID is taken by the MEO as means to make a positive identification. The license not only contains the photograph of the decedent, but the registration number to access the decedent's fingerprint information. The license is property of the State and was issued to and for use only by the decedent. Therefore, it is retained as a permanent part of the investigative file. A color copy can be made and sent to the family at their request.
4. Prescription medications and any illicit drugs or drug paraphernalia found are considered evidence and are not released back to family.

Where do I obtain the Death Certificate?

If the MEO is investigating the case and an autopsy is performed, we will issue the Death Certificate. It is given to the funeral home to be filed with State Vital Statistics. The funeral home will issue you as many copies as you request and pay for. Copies may also be obtained from the County or State Dept of Vital Statistics.

When can I view the body?

After the MEO takes jurisdiction of a case, we do not allow viewing of the decedent until the case has been released by the Pathologist. Once released, the body is immediately sent to the funeral home and viewing can then usually take place (Please ask your funeral director, as viewing is not always possible in

certain cases.) The funeral home has viewing rooms where the family can remain as long as they wish in comfort and privacy.

What about tissue/ organ donation?

Approval for release is required by the MEO for tissue/ organ donation in deaths that fall under Coroner Statutes. Only heart valves, skin, long bones, and corneas can be donated after death. Persons on life support may be eligible for organ donation. Donation will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

SERVICES PROVIDED TO YOU

LARIMER COUNTY MORTUARIES

Fort Collins:

Allnutt Funeral Service	970-482-3208
Bohlender Funeral Chapel	970-482-4244
Goes Funeral Care	970-482-2221
Resthaven Funeral Service	970-667-0202
Vessey Funeral Services	970-482-5065

Loveland:

Allnutt Funeral Service	970-667-1121
Kibbey-Fishburn Funeral Home	970-667-5885
Viegut Funeral Home	970-679-4669

Estes Park:

Allnutt Funeral Service	970-586-3101
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CLEANING SERVICES

212 Degrees Restoration	970-231-0120
Aftermath	800-366-9923
BioClean of Colorado	970-686-5015
Bio-One	970-818-1099
Blu Sky Restoration	970-416-0600
Colorado Crime Scene Cleaners	303-777-0190
Steri-Clean Colorado	888-577-7209

GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

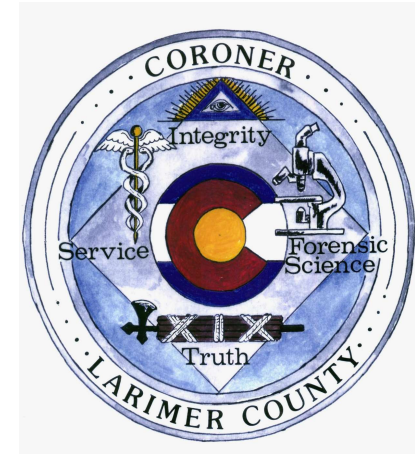
Touchstone Health Partners	970-494-4200
Pathways Hospice	970-663-3500
Alliance for Suicide Prevention	970-482-2209
Center for Loss and Life Transition	970-226-6050
CSP Victim's Advocates	970-506-4986
Larimer County Victim's Advocates	970-498-5149

BODY DONATION

Donor Alliance	303-360-6000
Rocky Mtn. Lions Eye Bank	720-848-3959
Univ of Colo State Anatomical	303-724-2410
Science Care	800-417-3747
Life Legacy	888-774-4438
MedCure	866-560-2525
Tomorrow Link	720-779-8677

OFFICE OF THE LARIMER COUNTY CORONER/MEDICAL EXAMINER

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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