

Role of the Medical Examiner related to Medical Assistance in Dying

1. What is the role of the Medical Examiner (ME) related to Medical Assistance in Dying services?

As part of the Fatalities Inquiries Act the Medical Examiner has jurisdiction to review and/or investigate any “un-natural” deaths. This includes all medical assistance in dying events. For any medical assistance in dying, a physician or Nurse Practitioner is required to report the death to the Office of the Medical Examiner. This will apply to medical assistance in dying procedures occurring anywhere in Alberta, both within AHS and in the community.

2. Does the Medical Examiner require advance notice of medical assistance in dying events?

No. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) can only initiate an investigation and open a file once an individual has died.

3. Will a physician be expected to complete the death certificate?

No. By law, attending physicians cannot complete death certificates for patients dying from medical assistance in dying procedures. The Medical Examiner will complete the death certificate expediently following the reporting of a medical assistance in dying procedure.

4. What will the Medical Examiner require to sign off on the individual’s death?

The paperwork required by the Medical Examiner’s Office will now include the Record of Request, Providing Practitioner Record, Consent to Treatment, and Record of Medication Administration. This needs to be submitted as soon as feasible after the procedure is completed so that families can proceed with asking a funeral home to register the death and move ahead with funeral arrangements. Receipt of documents within 24 hours is strongly advised so as not to delay funeral arrangements for families. The fax cover sheets are attached at the end of this document, indicating the required documentation.

5. Will the Medical Examiner require that the individual’s body be transported to Edmonton or Calgary following the medical assistance in dying procedure?

No. Through a change in requirements, the Medical Examiner will not routinely require that the individual’s body be transported to the Edmonton or Calgary Medical Examiner’s Office. The Medical Examiner will review all submitted paperwork; transfer to the Medical Examiner’s Office will only be necessary on very rare occasions if questions arise from review of the documentation that in the opinion of the Medical Examiner require the individual’s body to be examined.

6. What will happen after an individual’s death?

As part of the discussions with patients and families, it is important to prepare the family for events that may occur after death arising from the medical assistance in dying procedure.

- a) If the providing practitioner (physician or Nurse Practitioner) has been present during the medical assistance in dying procedure and is able to pronounce the individual deceased, the individual’s body may be released to the funeral home of choice. No police need to be in attendance and the

OCME will not be required to attend unless any concerns are raised by the Medical Examiner about the death.

- b) If the providing practitioner (physician or Nurse Practitioner) is not present during the individual's death and is unavailable to pronounce the individual deceased (i.e. with the self-administered protocol), the person present at the scene of death will need to contact EMS so that death can be pronounced. The individual's body may then be released to the funeral home of choice. The EMS team must let the OCME know the death has occurred and should call the OCME whilst on scene. No police need to be in attendance and the OCME will not attend at the death unless there are any concerns about the death. The EMS team will be asked to question the person present at the scene for the name of the providing practitioner so that the OCME can track the paperwork that needs to be submitted to the OCME by that provider.

The funeral home will need to be made aware that this is a Medical Examiner case and that the death certificate will be received from the Medical Examiner. The funeral home should be advised to call the OCME in either Edmonton (780-427-4987) or Calgary (403-297-8123) ASAP so that the OCME can direct the death certificate to them expediently.

7. Will there be changes to the death certificate?

No. At this time changes to the death certificate will not be required. In particular there are no anticipated changes to the "manner of death" section at this time. The Medical Examiner in Alberta has a mechanism to track reported events and categorizes the "manner of death" all medical assistance in dying death as 'unclassified' which is neither 'natural' nor 'suicide' but indicates a drug poisoning.

8. What reporting mechanisms are required?

The Medical Examiner will review and/or investigate each event. The review will be predominantly paper based without requirement for the body to be examined by the medical examiner. In addition, under the federal legislation, there is a requirement for separate reporting of all medical assistance in dying events to the federal government which, in Alberta, will be via the Care Coordination Service who will help facilitate this reporting.

Date: _____

Pages: _____ (including cover sheet)

To	
Name:	Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (Edmonton)
Fax:	780-422-4063
Phone:	780-427-4987

From	
Name:	_____
Fax:	_____
Phone:	_____

Re: Medical Assistance in Dying Documentation

- Record of Request for Medical Assistance in Dying
- Providing Practitioner Record for Medical Assistance in Dying
- Consent to Treatment
- Record of Medication Administration

MESSAGE:

Date: _____

Pages: _____ (including cover sheet)

To	
Name:	Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (Calgary)
Fax:	403-297-8134
Phone:	403-297-8123

From	
Name:	_____
Fax:	_____
Phone:	_____

Re: Medical Assistance in Dying Documentation

- Record of Request for Medical Assistance in Dying
- Providing Practitioner Record for Medical Assistance in Dying
- Consent to Treatment
- Record of Medication Administration

MESSAGE:

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