

Medical Examiner (ME) Cases

Any patient death in the following categories falls under the medical examiner's jurisdiction and shall be reported to the Galveston County Medical Examiner's Office.

- When a person dies within 24 hours after admission to a hospital, jail, prison, or other institution;
- When a person is killed, or from any cause dies an unnatural death, except under the sentence of the law; or dies in the absence of one or more credible witnesses.
- When an identified or unidentified human body is found and the cause or circumstances of the death are unknown.
- When circumstances of the death of any person are such as to lead to suspicion that death was by unlawful means.
- When a person commits suicide or the circumstances of his/her death are such as to lead to suspicion of suicide.
- When a person dies without having been attended by a duly licensed and practicing physician and the local health officer or registrar of vital statistics required to report the cause of death does not know the cause of death.
- When a person dies having been attended immediately preceding death by a duly licensed and practicing physician or physicians and such physician(s) are not certain as to the cause of death and are unable to certify with certainty the cause of death.
- When a child 12 months old or younger dies suddenly or is found dead and if the cause of death is unknown.
- When a child younger than six years old dies, and an inquest is required by Chapter 264, Family Code.
- The medical examiner's investigator is contacted by calling their answering service at 942-4459.
- The physician attending death should not initially request permission from the deceased's next of kin for an autopsy on a patient whose death falls within the medical examiner's jurisdiction, since the medical examiner may perform an autopsy without family permission. If the medical examiner declines to authorize an autopsy, the physician attending death may then request permission for an autopsy from the next-of-kin.
- Recovery of organs and/or tissues for donation can only be done after approval from the medical examiner or deputy medical examiner and in accordance with Policy 9.15.3.