

CHAPTER 142

DEAD BODIES FOR SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES

Referred to in [§135.11](#), [331.804](#)

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142.1 Delivery of bodies.

The body of every person who died in a public asylum, hospital, penitentiary, or reformatory in this state, or found dead within the state, or who is to be buried at public expense in this state, except those buried under the provisions of [chapter 144C](#) or [249](#), and which is suitable for scientific purposes, shall be delivered to the medical college of the state university, or some osteopathic or chiropractic college or school located in this state, which has been approved under the law regulating the practice of osteopathic medicine or chiropractic; but no such body shall be delivered to any such college or school if the deceased person expressed a desire during the person's last illness that the person's body should be buried or cremated, nor if such is the desire of the person's relatives. Such bodies shall be equitably distributed among said colleges and schools according to their needs for teaching anatomy in accordance with such rules as may be adopted by the department of health and human services. The expense of transporting said bodies to such college or school shall be paid by the college or school receiving the same. If the deceased person has not expressed a desire during the person's last illness that the person's body should be buried or cremated and no person authorized to control the deceased person's remains under [section 144C.5](#) requests the person's body for burial or cremation, and if a friend objects to the use of the deceased person's body for scientific purposes, said deceased person's body shall be delivered to such friend for burial or cremation at no expense to the state or county. Unless such friend provides for burial and burial expenses within five days, the body shall be used for scientific purposes under [this chapter](#).

[C73, §4018; C97, §4946; S13, §4946-b; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2351; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §142.1]

[2008 Acts, ch 1051, §1, 22](#); [2009 Acts, ch 133, §41](#); [2023 Acts, ch 19, §229](#); [2024 Acts, ch 1161, §29, 137](#)

Referred to in [§142.2](#), [142.3](#), [156.2](#), [252.27](#)

Approval of medical, osteopathic, and chiropractic colleges, see [§148.3](#), [151.4](#)

2024 amendment effective July 1, 2025; [2024 Acts, ch 1161, §137](#)

Section amended

142.2 Furnished to physicians.

When there are more dead bodies available for use under [section 142.1](#) than are desired by said colleges or schools, the same may be delivered to physicians in the state for scientific study under such rules as may be adopted by the department of health and human services.

[S13, §4946-b; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2352; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §142.2]

[2023 Acts, ch 19, §230](#)

Referred to in [§142.3](#), [156.2](#)

142.3 Notification of department.

Every county medical examiner, funeral director or embalmer, and the managing officer of every public asylum, hospital, penitentiary, or reformatory, as soon as any dead body shall come into the person's custody which may be used for scientific purposes as provided in [sections 142.1](#) and [142.2](#), shall at once notify the nearest relative or friend of the deceased, if known, and the department of health and human services, and hold such body unburied for forty-eight hours. Upon receipt of notification, the department shall issue verbal or written

instructions relative to the disposition to be made of said body. Complete jurisdiction over said bodies is vested exclusively in the department of health and human services. No autopsy or post mortem, except as are legally ordered by county medical examiners, shall be performed on any of said bodies prior to their delivery to the medical schools.

[S13, §4946-c; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2353; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §142.3]

2013 Acts, ch 90, §28; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §231; 2024 Acts, ch 1161, §30, 137

2024 amendment effective July 1, 2025; 2024 Acts, ch 1161, §137

Section amended

142.4 Surrender to relatives.

1. When any dead body which has been delivered under [this chapter](#) for scientific purposes is subsequently claimed by any relative, it shall be at once surrendered to such relative for burial without public expense; and all bodies received under [this chapter](#) shall be held for a period of thirty days before being used. Unless such person claiming the body for burial pays the costs that have been incurred in the care and transportation of the body within thirty days after claiming it, all rights thereto shall cease and the body may then be used as if no claim had been made.

2. [This section](#) shall not apply to bodies given under authority of the revised uniform anatomical gift Act as provided in [chapter 142C](#).

[C73, §4018; C97, §4946; S13, §4946-c, -d; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2354; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §142.4]

2003 Acts, ch 108, §36; 2007 Acts, ch 44, §26; 2020 Acts, ch 1062, §94

142.5 Disposition after dissection.

The remains of every body received for scientific purposes under [this chapter](#) shall be decently buried or cremated after it has been used for said purposes, and a failure to do so shall be a simple misdemeanor.

[C73, §4019; C97, §4947; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2355; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §142.5]

Referred to in [§156.2](#)

142.6 Record of receipt.

Any college, school, or physician receiving the dead body of any human being for scientific purposes shall keep a record showing:

1. The name of the person from whom, and the time and place, such body was received.
2. The description of the receptacle in which the body was received, including the shipping direction attached to the same.
3. The description of the body, including the length, weight, and sex, apparent age at time of death, color of hair and beard, if any, and all marks or scars which might be used to identify the same.
4. The condition of the body and whether mutilated so as to prevent identification.

[C97, §4948; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2356; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §142.6]

Referred to in [§142.7](#), [142.10](#)

142.7 Record and bodies.

The record required by [section 142.6](#) and the dead body of every human being received under [this chapter](#) shall be subject to inspection by any peace officer, or relative of the deceased.

[C97, §4948, 4949; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2357; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §142.7]

142.8 Purpose for which body used.

1. The dead bodies delivered under [this chapter](#) shall be used only within the limits of this state for the purpose of scientific, medical, and surgical study, and no person shall remove the same beyond the limits of this state or in any manner traffic therein. Any person who shall violate [this section](#) shall be guilty of a serious misdemeanor.

2. [This section](#) shall not apply to bodies given under authority of the revised uniform anatomical gift Act as provided in [chapter 142C](#).

[C73, §4020; C97, §4950; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2358; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §142.8]

[2003 Acts, ch 108, §37](#); [2007 Acts, ch 44, §27](#); [2020 Acts, ch 1062, §94](#)

142.9 Failure to deliver dead body.

Any person having the custody of the dead body of any human being which is required to be delivered for scientific purposes by [this chapter](#), who shall fail to notify the department of health and human services of the existence of such body, or fail to deliver the same in accordance with the instructions of the department, shall be guilty of a simple misdemeanor.

[S13, §4946-e; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2359; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §142.9]

[2023 Acts, ch 19, §232](#)

142.10 Use without proper record.

Any physician or member of the instructional staff of any college or school who uses, or permits others under the physician's or member's charge to use the dead body of a human being for the purpose of medical or surgical study without the record required in [section 142.6](#) having been made, or who shall refuse to allow any peace officer or relative of the deceased to inspect said record or body, shall be guilty of a serious misdemeanor.

[C97, §4949; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2360; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §142.10]

142.11 Penalties.

Any person who shall receive or deliver any dead body of a human being knowing that any of the provisions of [this chapter](#) have been violated, shall be guilty of an aggravated misdemeanor.

[S13, §4946-e; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2361; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §142.11]

142.12 Reserved.

142.13 Burial in private cemetery lot.

In the event that a deceased person, whose body has been used for scientific purposes as provided in [this chapter](#), owns or has the right of burial in a private or family cemetery lot in the state of Iowa, that deceased person's body shall be buried in that lot.

[C58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §142.13]

[2021 Acts, ch 80, §71](#)