

641—127.2(331,691) Duties of medical examiners—jurisdiction over deaths which affect the public interest.

127.2(1) Jurisdiction. Upon receiving notification of a death which affects the public interest, a medical examiner shall notify any appropriate law enforcement agency not otherwise notified and shall take charge of the body of the decedent. The body shall not be disturbed or removed from the position in which it was found without authorization from the medical examiner except for the purpose of preserving the body from loss or destruction or permitting the passage of traffic on a highway, railroad, or airport, or unless the failure to remove the body might endanger life, safety, or health.

127.2(2) Investigation. A county medical examiner shall conduct a preliminary investigation of the cause and manner of death and shall utilize the investigative protocol outlined in the most current edition of the County Medical Examiner's Handbook, available from the state medical examiner's office. A medical examiner may perform or authorize performance of any scientific study to assist in identifying the cause, circumstances, and manner of death. A medical examiner shall cooperate with other investigating officials and agencies involved and shall share reports, information, and conclusions with these officials and agencies.

127.2(3) Reports required.

a. Form ME-1.

(1) Preparation and filing. A county medical examiner shall prepare a written report of the examiner's findings on the Preliminary Report of Investigation by Medical Examiner, Form ME-1. A county medical examiner shall file the original Form ME-1 with the state medical examiner's office within 14 days of the date of death and shall file a copy of the Form ME-1 with the county attorney within 14 days of the date of the death and shall retain a copy for the medical examiner's records.

(2) Content. Form ME-1 shall be completed as fully as possible in light of all available information and may be signed by either a county medical examiner or a county medical examiner investigator acting under the supervision of a county medical examiner. If the cause or manner of death, identity of the decedent, or other information is unknown or pending at the time of filing, "unknown" or "pending" may be written in the appropriate area of the form. If additional information becomes available, this information shall be forwarded to the state medical examiner in written form at such time as it becomes available to be added as a supplement to the file.

b. Jurisdiction declined or terminated. A form designated by the office of the state medical examiner shall be completed and filed in accordance with subparagraphs (1) and (2) of paragraph "a" above in cases reported to the county medical examiner where jurisdiction is terminated or declined.

127.2(4) Disposition of body. After an investigation, including an autopsy if one was performed, the body of the decedent shall be made available to the funeral home designated by a relative or friend of the decedent for burial or appropriate disposition. A medical examiner shall not use influence in favor of a particular funeral director or funeral home. If no one claims a body, it shall be disposed of as provided in Iowa Code chapter 142.

127.2(5) Coverage.

a. When an individual is required to report a death to a medical examiner and the county medical examiner cannot be located or is not available, the individual shall contact a county medical examiner from any adjacent Iowa county to perform those duties outlined in this chapter. The responding medical examiner shall have full authority to conduct any procedures necessary to the investigation of the cause and manner of death. If an adjacent county medical examiner is not available, the state medical examiner shall be contacted and may act in the capacity of a county medical examiner.

b. The responding county medical examiner shall be reimbursed by the county for which the service is provided for all fees and expenses at the rate which is customarily paid by the county for which the service is provided or at a rate agreed upon by the medical examiner and the board of supervisors of the county for which the service is provided.