

**144.28 Medical certification.**

1. a. For the purposes of [this section](#), “*nonnatural cause of death*” means the death is a direct or indirect result of physical, chemical, thermal, or electrical trauma, or drug or alcohol intoxication or other poisoning.

b. Unless there is a nonnatural cause of death, the medical certification shall be completed and signed by the physician, physician assistant, or advanced registered nurse practitioner in charge of the patient’s care for the illness or condition which resulted in death within seventy-two hours after receipt of the death certificate from the funeral director or individual who initially assumes custody of the body.

c. If there is a nonnatural cause of death, the county or state medical examiner shall be notified and shall conduct an inquiry.

d. If the decedent was an infant or child and the cause of death is not known, a medical examiner’s inquiry shall be conducted and an autopsy performed as necessary to exclude a nonnatural cause of death.

e. If upon inquiry into a death, the county or state medical examiner determines that a preexisting natural disease or condition was the likely cause of death and that the death does not affect the public interest as described in [section 331.802, subsection 3](#), the medical examiner may elect to defer to the physician, physician assistant, or advanced registered nurse practitioner in charge of the patient’s preexisting condition the certification of the cause of death.

f. When an inquiry is required by the county or state medical examiner, the medical examiner shall investigate the cause and manner of death and shall complete and sign the medical certification within seventy-two hours after determination of the cause and manner of death.

2. The person completing the medical certification of cause of death shall attest to its accuracy either by signature or by an electronic process approved by rule.

[C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §2320; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, §141.4(18); C71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §144.28]

[97 Acts, ch 159, §16](#); [2002 Acts, ch 1098, §2](#); [2007 Acts, ch 159, §26](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1058, §13](#); [2011 Acts, ch 26, §3](#)

Referred to in [§144.35](#), [331.611](#)