

VIRGINIA Department of Health



OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER

INFORMATION FOR PHYSICIANS
AND HOSPITALS ON INFANT
AND CHILD DEATHS

Injured and deceased children are seen in hospital emergency rooms and as inpatients. Hospital staff should report such incidents immediately to the law enforcement jurisdiction where the injury or death occurred so that the appropriate authorities can begin or complete an investigation as soon as practical.

Cases to Report to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME):

- All traumatic deaths regardless of the cause or manner. The time of survival from the trauma to the death is irrelevant if the injury caused or contributed to the death.
- All cases of suspected child abuse or neglect.
- Deaths of infants or children who die suddenly or unexpectedly without a known cause (a known cause of death is a natural chronic disease in a child where death is expectant. For example, leukemia or other cancers). Otherwise, the sudden unexpected death of a child with chronic disease needs to be reported to the OCME.
- Deaths of infants and children who do not have a physician.
- Any death suspected of being due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Cases should be reported to the local medical examiner or medical death investigator in the jurisdiction where the death occurred. If that person cannot be located, then the death should be reported to the appropriate district office (Richmond, Norfolk, Roanoke, Fairfax).

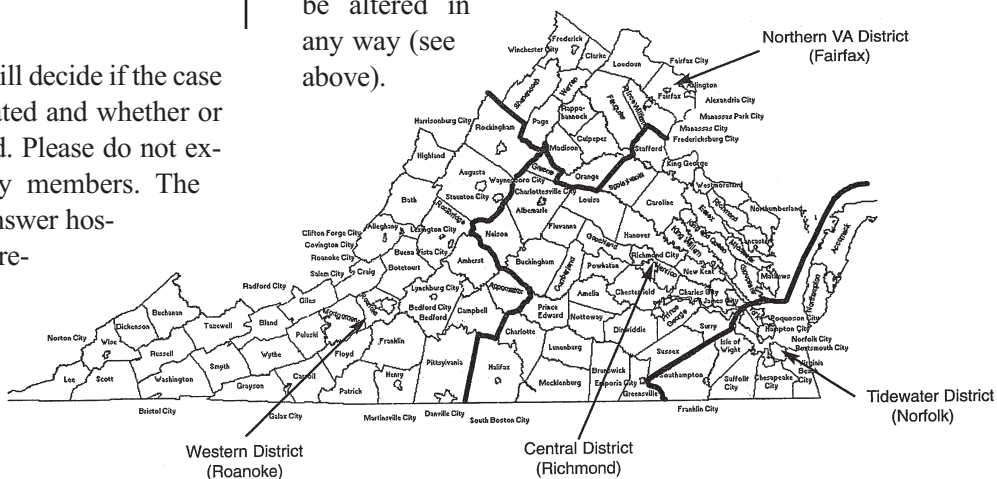
The Medical Examiner System will decide if the case meets the criteria to be investigated and whether or not an autopsy will be performed. Please do not explain OCME policies to family members. The OCME office will be happy to answer hospital staff and family's questions regarding case jurisdiction or case selection for autopsy.

Care of a Deceased Child if a Medical Examiner's Case:

- All clothing and medications should be preserved and sent with the body to the medical examiner's office.
- Save any admission blood and send with the body. If that is not possible, ask the laboratory to hold the blood for pick up by a medical examiner's representative.
- DO NOT CLEAN THE DECEASED or remove any therapy item that is in place when death is pronounced.
- Do not alter the body in any way (e.g. re moving a lock of hair, performing any other diagnostic procedures, etc.) to prevent the introduction of artefactual injury.
- Send the infant in any receiving linen, if present, and place in a clean body bag.

Viewing and Holding of the Infant or Child After Death:

- Viewing may be done, if no physical contact with the deceased is allowed, while under supervision of hospital staff, as long as the infant is not altered in any way for this process.
- Holding of the infant may be done in cases where there is no known or suspected child abuse or no known or suspected neglect. The procedures for this are as follows: Only the parents may hold the infant in the presence of the law enforcement personnel responsible for investigating the death. The infant may not be altered in any way (see above).



Where do families write or call?

The addresses and phone numbers of the district offices are as follows:

Central District

400 East Jackson Street
Richmond, VA 23219
Phone: (804) 786-3174
Fax: (804) 371-8595
E-mail: OCME_CENT@vdh.virginia.gov

Tidewater District

830 Southampton Avenue, Suite 100
Norfolk, VA 23510
Phone: (757) 683-8366
Fax: (757) 683-2589
E-mail: OCME_TIDE@vdh.virginia.gov

Western District

6600 Northside High School Road
Roanoke, VA 24019
Phone: (540) 561-6615
Fax: (540) 561-6619
E-mail: OCME_WEST@vdh.virginia.gov

Northern Virginia District

10850 Pyramid Place, Suite 121
Manassas, VA 20110
Phone: (703) 530-2600
Fax: (703) 530-0510
E-mail: OCME_NOVA@vdh.virginia.gov
www.vdh.virginia.gov/medexam/