

Information for Families and Friends



John M. Urbancic, MD

Office of the Coroner
Geauga County
12450 Merritt Road
Chardon OH 44024

geaugacoroner@co.geauga.oh.us

On behalf of the Geauga County's Coroner's Office, may we offer our deepest sympathy to you and your family during this difficult time.

In order to assist you, it's our hope that this information will provide answers to some of the questions or concerns that you may have.

Coroner's Office –
440-279-2165

Where will my loved one be taken?

If an autopsy is going to be performed, your loved one will be transported to the Medical Examiner's district morgue, which is in Cleveland OH.

Why is the Coroner's Office involved?

Ohio law requires the County Coroner to investigate the circumstances and determine the cause and manner of death in all deaths that are:

- Sudden, when a person is in good health
- Not under the care of a physician
- Deaths where the cause is unknown
- The result of violence
- Unlawful or due to criminal neglect

Why must the body of the deceased be identified?

Identification is necessary in order to establish verification of identity and to complete the Death Certificate. A decedent may also be brought to the Coroner's Office if the identity of the deceased or the next of kin is unknown. The decedent is retained by this office for a reasonable period of time before internment at a cemetery, or until the next of kin can be located by the Police, identification established, and funeral arrangements made. *An unidentified decedent cannot be released until a positive identity is established.

What is the identification procedure?

There are seven methods for identification, which include:

- Fingerprinting, Dental records
- X-ray records, Anthropology
- Visual identification-DNA
- Mechanical implants or devices, Tattoos

Depending on the method used to make the identification, the process could take anywhere from days to weeks (rarely months). Each case is different, but most are done within a few days.

*In the event that a visual notification is required, you will be notified by the Coroner.

What is an autopsy?

An autopsy is a systematic examination of the body of a deceased person by a qualified pathologist. The purpose is to identify diseases, trauma, or injuries that may have caused the death. The decision to perform an autopsy will be determined by the Coroner, and may be important as far as insurance is concerned, as well as to identify undetected disease processes which could impact surviving family members. A written record is made of findings and test results, which are available upon request by next of kin or other authorized individuals. Case reports are completed within 180 days, but can take longer depending on circumstances.

*There is no cost to the family of the deceased for the performance of an autopsy.

Will I be able to have an open casket service if an autopsy is performed?

YES – Autopsies are performed in a professional manner with dignity and respect that does not interfere with the viewing. If a person could be viewed before autopsy, they should be viewable afterward.

How long will it take before my loved one is released from the Coroner’s Jurisdiction?

Depending on what time of day the Coroner’s Office is notified and takes jurisdiction, the medical information available, and the circumstances surrounding the death, the decedent may be released the same day or later the next day. In the case of suspicious deaths or deaths which require further investigation, your loved one’s remains may be held for additional time and will be released as promptly as possible.

Is viewing or visitation allowed while the deceased is under the Coroner’s Jurisdiction?

The Coroner’s Office and the hospital facility are not designed to handle bereaved relatives. Only in identification purposes is viewing of the remains allowed in a limited capacity. Arrangements for viewing should be made with your funeral director.

Who contacts the Funeral Home?

Once you have selected a funeral home, please let them know that the decedent is under the Jurisdiction of the Coroner’s Office. The funeral home will call the Coroner’s Office as soon as possible to inform us of your choice.

When will the Death Certificate be issued?

The Coroner’s Office will issue a Death Certificate within ten (10) days of the examination. The Funeral Home chosen by the family is responsible by law to file the Death Certificate with The Ohio Bureau of Vital Statistics. In cases where the cause and manner of death cannot be established within the initial filing period, a supplemental Death Certificate will be filed automatically by the Coroner’s Office

What does “Pending” mean on a Death Certificate?

Occasionally, additional information, more extensive testing, or further studies are required in order to accurately determine a cause and manner of death. A Death Certificate with “Pending” as the cause of death still allows your family to make immediate funeral arrangements. The final Death Certificate will be issued upon completion of the investigation.

How do I obtain a certified copy of the Death Certificate?

The Coroner’s Office does not issue copies of the Death Certificate, however copies can be requested from the Funeral Home when arrangements are made. The Bureau of Vital Statistics also has copies which are available for a fee for each copy obtained.

How can I obtain my loved one’s personal effects?

Clothing and property are often released to the Funeral Home picking up the decedent with family approval. In certain circumstances, family may be required to pick up the effects in person, and in rare cases, such as homicide, clothing and effects may be retained as evidence until the closing of a criminal prosecution.

Dealing with the pain at the loss of a loved one is difficult. Services to help with the grieving process are available. Your primary care provider is your best first point of contact. Some other resources are listed below and are available to all residents of Geauga County.

**Copeline – 440-285-5665 or 1-888-285-5665
Crisis Text Line – “4Hope” to 741741**

**Tracy Jordan, Geauga County Victim’s Advocate
440-279-2062**

**Gauga County Sheriff’s Office
440-286-1234**