

November 13, 2013

Dear Funeral Home Partners,

With the holidays just around the corner, the Maricopa County Office of Vital Registration (MCOVR) is preparing for what we all experience as the busiest time of year. We would like to share with our funeral home partners some suggestions and reminders regarding the remote attestation of medical certification and disposition-transit permit process. We have identified a few barriers and offer the following recommendations to improve this process for all partners involved.

Our mutual priority is to serve the community during times of grief and sorrow. As we attempt to make the final disposition process as smooth as possible, we need to ensure that we have a mutual understanding of the policies and procedures involved regarding the initiation of a decedent record and obtaining a disposition-transit permit for final disposition.

The Medical Certification Unit within the Office of Vital Registration is responsible for reviewing and completing all cause of death information and issuing every permit for Maricopa County. During the months of November through February, the MCOVR may have upwards to 300 records in the queue in one day. Whether it is 100 or 300, each record must be reviewed so that the cause of death information may be processed. As you are aware, we must do this on a first come, first serve basis, including any that may need follow-up with the Medical Certifier for additional information. Please take this into consideration and allow our office a sufficient amount of time to process these records. We will continue to do whatever we can to assist all partners with receiving a permit as soon as possible. Keep in mind, we are processing a large number of records and we must make sure that all information is sufficient and complete.

Additionally, we request that our funeral home partners refrain from scheduling disposition without having received the required cause of death certification first. Although we understand that your facility's goal is to accommodate the needs of the families we are both serving, our office cannot guarantee that a sufficient cause of death will be received by the scheduled disposition date. We have experienced many unfortunate situations where services had to be cancelled and in some instances a burial rescheduled after a graveside service could not take place because a sufficient cause of death had not been provided to our office in order to receive a permit for disposition. We understand that this may cause undue stress on all parties involved, including the family. To avoid this type of event, we ask that families be educated on the process and be made aware that without a sufficient cause of death and disposition-transit permit, their loved one's final disposition cannot take place.

Also, during the holidays, it is not uncommon for our office to receive a large number of Out of State permit requests. In order for this process to run smoothly, please ensure that cause of death information is provided from the state where the death occurred. Although some states may not require a cause of death to be completed prior to ship-out, the state of Arizona is required by law to receive cause of death information for any decedent whose final disposition occurs in Arizona, regardless of place of death. It is the responsibility of the funeral home to collect this information prior to the decedent being shipped in to the state. If a death certificate or permit from the

place of death does not contain cause of death information, a letter on letterhead from the certifying physician listing the intended cause of death will suffice. We will also accept a "Working Copy" of the death certificate. Additionally, please note that if a decedent is being shipped in from outside of the United States and the documents provided are not in English, the responsible funeral home is required to have the documentation translated prior to submission to our office to obtain an Out of State permit.

We thank you for your cooperation and understanding of the clarified workflow. We appreciate your partnership and wish you a wonderful and stress-free holiday season. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this communication, please feel free to contact me by e-mail at LindseyHall@mail.maricopa.gov or by phone at 602-372-2635.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lindsey M. Hall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lindsey M. Hall
Medical Certification & Disposition Supervisor
Maricopa County Office of Vital Registration
Department of Public Health

CC: Arizona State Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers
Maricopa County Office of the Medical Examiner
Arizona Department of Health Services, Office of Vital Records
Arizona Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Association