|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Frequently Asked Questions**  **Will an autopsy be performed?**  The [*Death Investigation Agency*] will perform an autopsy when there is a need to establish cause of death or in cases where criminal proceedings may follow. Autopsies are usually not performed if the cause of death is determined to be from natural causes.  If religious or cultural practices should be considered, please speak to the investigator and victim services specialist.  **Who can authorize the release of the decedent (e.g., to a funeral home)?**  [*Insert Your State Law*]  **Who can obtain a copy of the autopsy report?**  [*Insert Your State Law*]  **How can I find out about the cause of death?**  You may contact your local death investigation agency at [*Insert Local Number*].  **When will a death certificate be issued?**  The [*Death Investigation Agency*] will work with the designated funeral home to complete a “pending” death certificate within [*number*] working days. A final death certificate may take six to [*number*] weeks if the death is being investigated.  **Where can I obtain a copy of the death certificate?**  Death certificates may be obtained from [*Insert the appropriate agency or office*].  **Are viewings allowed at the *[Death Investigation Agency]*?**  [*Insert Death Investigation Agency’s Policies and Practices*]  [*Agency*] Victim Services may be contacted to provide support and information about resources you may need. | |  | | --- | | **Who Can Help?**  [*Agency*] Victim Services can assist you with information regarding victims’ rights, Crime Victim Compensation, case status, navigation of the criminal justice system, and referrals to the appropriate community resources or helping professionals or organizations according to your specific needs.  **Resources**  Local Resources  [*Insert state Crime Victims’ Compensation information*]  [*Insert other relevant local resources*]  National Resources  **Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE)**  1-877-894-8463  [www.vinelink.com](http://www.vinelink.com)  **National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)**  800-879-6682  [www.trynova.org](http://www.trynova.org/)  **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMSHA) National Helpline**  1-800-662-4357  [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)  This publication was produced under [*Grant Number*] awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this draft publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.  [*Revision Date*] | | |  | | --- | | **Death Investigation**  **[*Agency*] Victim**  **Adult Grief and Loss**  **Adult Grief and Loss**  **Services**  **[*address*]**  **[*phone number]***  **[*Insert Agency logo*]**  **[insert Agency logo]**  **[insert Agency logo]**  **[insert Agency logo]**  Name/ID Number:  Direct Number: | |
| **Expected Deaths**  If the death was expected, an investigator will probably not respond to the scene. The case will be reviewed, and you will be contacted if any questions regarding the loss of your loved one arise.  **Unexpected Deaths**  If the death was unexpected, an investigator may respond to the scene, even if the death appears to be from suicide or natural causes.  The scene will be treated as a crime scene to protect the integrity of any evidence that might exist.  During the investigation, the investigator will likely speak with the persons who discovered the deceased, in addition to any close friends or family members.  Once the initial investigation is complete, follow-up investigation activities may be completed (e.g., consultation with the person’s doctor, subsequent interviews).  **Child Deaths**  If the case involves the death of a child, an investigation will also be completed by [*State Adult/Child Welfare Agency*]. | **Death Investigator’s Office**  [*Add agency- and/or process-specific information*]  **What Do I Need to**  **Do Right Away?**  **Get Support—**If you have not already done so, contact a support person to be with you. It’s crucial to have emotional and physical assistance of family members, trusted friends, and other important people during this difficult time.  **Select a Funeral Home—**If it is determined that your loved one died of natural causes and the death certificate has been signed by a doctor, your loved one can be transported to the selected funeral home or location where afterlife arrangements will be coordinated or completed. Government agencies cannot recommend a funeral home but may have a list of local funeral parlors in the area.  If the [*Death Investigation Agency*] is investigating the death of your loved one, they will be transported to the [*Death Investigation Agency*]. The Funeral Director at the selected funeral home should be notified to contact the [*Death Investigation Agency*] at [*Insert number*] to discuss the process and time frame for final arrangements.  Victim Services can provide a list of local funeral homes and organizations to aid in the process of final arrangements.  **Notify Relatives and Friends—**Placing multiple calls and delivering the news of a death can be an overwhelming task, and you are encouraged to accept help from family and friends. [*Agency*] Victim Services can also help with this upon your request. | **What About the Media?**  It is entirely your decision whether you contact or communicate with media representatives. [*Agency*] Victim Services and Public Information Officer(s) can help you understand your options.  **What About My Loved**  **One’s Belongings?**  Every effort will be made to promptly return the personal effects of your loved one, provided these items are not considered evidence.  All evidence will be collected by the [*Agency*]. Once the death investigation is completed, items may be returned or, if you prefer, destroyed. Victim Services personnel can provide you with the details regarding the condition of property that is available for release and the process for the return or destruction of this property.  In criminal investigations, items will be released only when they are no longer needed as evidence. The prosecuting agency usually makes this decision. This can be days, weeks, months, or even years after the death.  **What About Cleaning?**  Scene cleanup is the responsibility of the property owner. Such cleanup may require a specialized cleaning service, and these costs may be covered by insurance. [*Agency*] Victim Services can provide a list of local companies that may be able to assist with this process. |