



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
MEDICAL EXAMINER

In-Custody Deaths

Odey C. Ukpo, M.D., M.S.
Chief Medical Examiner

Jurisdiction

All in custody deaths fall under the jurisdiction of the medical examiner

Personnel

Medical Examiner Investigator

Deputy Medical Examiner

- Forensic Technician

Criminalist

Procedures

- Fully body photographs in a photo studio
- Full body CT scan
- Deputy Medical Examiner reviews the circumstances
 - Including photos in the jail
- Investigating agencies invited (e.g. DA, OIG, law enforcement, DHS-correctional health)
- Examination of the body (externally)
- Autopsy (internal examination)

After the Autopsy

Body is available for
release the same day

Await toxicology
results if applicable

- Results completed
in 90 days 90% of
the time

Complete autopsy
report when cause of
death is determined

Final report available
to the public on
average 4-5 months

- Law enforcement
receives a copy
upon request
-

The Death Certificate



Each state has vital statistics regulations that require a DC be completed and filed when a death occurs



Information forwarded to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)

Purposes

Legal documentation

Demographic
information

Information as to the
cause, manner and
circumstances of
death

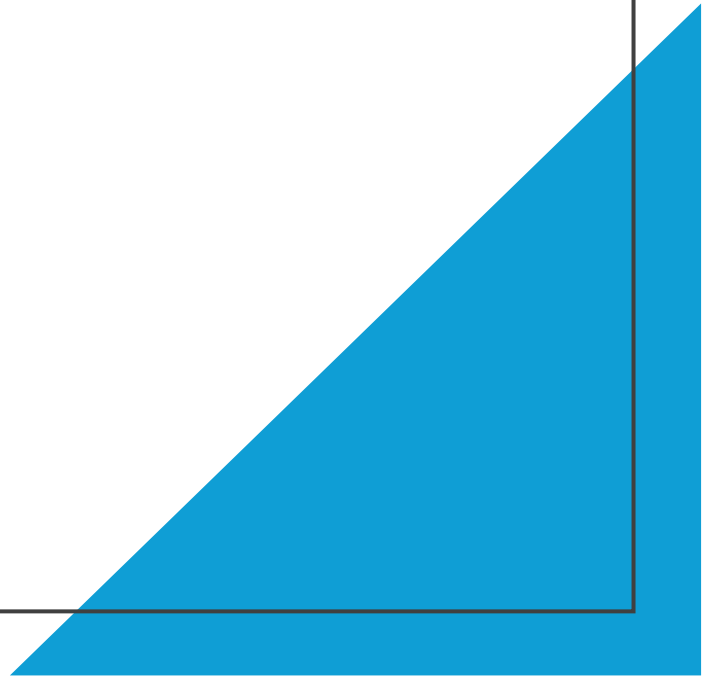
Information to settle
an estate

Information on
disposition of the
remains

Information that may
be used for public
health agencies or
researchers

Cause of Death Determination

- The essential factor required for the death
- Example
 - 70 year old moving boxes all afternoon and collapses
 - Autopsy: severe heart disease
 - Cause of death: Heart Disease
 - Manner of death: Natural
 - Strenuous activity not the essential factor



Quality of Care

- Medical examiner is not a regulatory body for quality of care (i.e. medical malpractice)
- Snapshot in time analysis of death
- Does not have the expertise to determine if the standard of care was followed or if the death was preventable
- Cannot determine if an action would have changed an outcome

Identification and Notification to Next of Kin



Procedures in identifying an individual

Drivers license

Scientific methods

- Fingerprint
- Dental records
- Surgical hardware serial numbers
- DNA



Notification

Legal next of kin (not based on closeness of relationship)