

# An Act

ENROLLED SENATE  
BILL NO. 707

By: Rosino of the Senate

and

Roe of the House

An Act relating to public health and safety; amending 63 O.S. 2021, Section 1-317, as amended by Section 1, Chapter 184, O.S.L. 2022 (63 O.S. Supp. 2023, Section 1-317), which relates to death certificates; extending time periods of certain requirements; removing obsolete and duplicative language; clarifying applicability of certain provision; specifying certain procedures for filing of death certificate; granting immunity from civil damages under certain conditions; amending 63 O.S. 2021, Section 941, which relates to investigation by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner; imposing timeline for conclusion of investigation except under certain circumstances; requiring the Office to make a good faith effort to provide certain disclosure; requiring certain notice to contain specified information; requiring licensed funeral director to make good faith effort to provide certain assistance; directing creation of certain process; amending 63 O.S. 2021, Section 947, which relates to certificate of death; requiring final certification of death to be signed immediately upon conclusion of investigation; updating statutory language; providing for codification; and providing an effective date.

SUBJECT: Death certificates

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 63 O.S. 2021, Section 1-317, as amended by Section 1, Chapter 184, O.S.L. 2022 (63 O.S. Supp. 2023, Section 1-317), is amended to read as follows:

Section 1-317. A. A death certificate for each death which occurs in this state shall be filed with the State Department of Health, within ~~three (3)~~ ten (10) calendar days after such death.

B. ~~The~~ It shall be the duty of the funeral director shall personally sign the death certificate and shall be responsible for filing to file the death certificate. If the funeral director is not available, the person acting as such who first assumes custody of a dead body in accordance with Section 1158 of Title 21 of the Oklahoma Statutes shall personally sign and file the death certificate. The funeral director shall obtain the personal data shall be obtained from the next of kin or the best qualified person or source available. The certificate shall be completed as to personal data and delivered to the attending physician or the medical examiner responsible for completing the medical certification portion of the certificate of death within twenty-four (24) hours after the death. No later than July 1, 2012, the personal data, and no later than July 1, 2017, the medical certificate portion, shall be entered, enter the personal data into the prescribed electronic system provided prescribed by the State Registrar of Vital Statistics, and the information submitted to the State Registrar of Vital Statistics. The resultant electronically transmit the partial certificate produced by the electronic system shall be provided to the physician, physician assistant, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, or medical examiner responsible for completing the medical certification portion of the certificate of death within twenty-four (24) hours after the death.

C. 1. The medical certification shall be completed and signed within forty-eight (48) hours certified within five (5) calendar days after death receipt of the partial certificate by the physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse Advanced Practice Registered Nurse in charge of the patient's care for the illness or condition which resulted in death, except when inquiry as to the cause of death is required by Section 938 of this title. No later than July 1, 2017, the The physician, physician assistant, or Advanced Practice Registered Nurse shall enter and certify the medical certification portion of certificate

~~data shall be entered into in the prescribed electronic system provided prescribed by the State Registrar of Vital Statistics and the information submitted to the State Registrar of Vital Statistics.~~

~~D. 2.~~ In the event that the physician, physician assistant, or ~~advanced practice registered nurse~~ Advanced Practice Registered Nurse in charge of the patient's care for the illness or condition which resulted in death is not in attendance at the time of death, the medical certification shall be completed and signed within ~~forty-eight (48) hours~~ five (5) calendar days after ~~death~~ receipt of the partial certificate by the physician, physician assistant, or ~~advanced practice registered nurse~~ Advanced Practice Registered Nurse in attendance at the time of death, except:

~~1. When~~

- a. when the patient is under hospice care at the time of death, the medical certification may be signed by the hospice's medical director~~†~~, and

~~2. When~~

- b. when inquiry as to the cause of death is required by Section 938 of this title.

Provided, that such certification, if signed by other than the attending physician, physician assistant, or ~~advanced practice registered nurse~~ Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, shall note on the face the name of the attending physician, physician assistant, or ~~advanced practice registered nurse~~ Advanced Practice Registered Nurse and that the information shown is only as reported.

D. Within four (4) calendar days after receipt of the medical certification from the physician, physician assistant, or Advanced Practice Registered Nurse as described in subsection C of this section, the funeral director shall conduct a final review of the personal data and the medical certification, electronically sign the death certificate, and submit the death certificate to the State Registrar of Vital Statistics through the electronic system prescribed by the State Registrar of Vital Statistics for official registration.

E. A certifier completing cause of death on a certificate of death who knows that a lethal drug, overdose or other means of assisting suicide within the meaning of Sections 3141.2 through 3141.4 of this title caused or contributed to the death shall list that means among the chain of events under cause of death or list it in the box that describes how the injury occurred. If such means is in the chain of events under cause of death or in the box that describes how the injury occurred, the certifier shall indicate "suicide" as the manner of death.

F. The authority of a physician assistant to carry out the functions described in this section shall be governed by the practice agreement as provided by Section 519.6 of Title 59 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

G. A physician, physician assistant, or Advanced Practice Registered Nurse completing and signing a medical certification in accordance with this section shall not be liable in a civil action to recover damages for any acts or omissions relating to the medical certification if the cause of death is determined in good faith using the individual's best clinical judgment consistent with current guidance provided by the applicable licensing board, unless the acts or omissions amount to willful or wanton misconduct. The immunity provided by this subsection shall be in addition to any other immunity from liability to which these individuals may be entitled.

SECTION 2. AMENDATORY 63 O.S. 2021, Section 941, is amended to read as follows:

Section 941. A. Upon receipt of notice of death of any person which under Section 931 et seq. of this title is subject to investigation, a representative ~~Death Investigator~~ death investigator from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner shall immediately initiate an investigation and shall document in detail, by the end of his or her assigned shift, all the known and available facts of the death scene in the electronic database of the Chief Medical Examiner. Decedent specimens, evidence, and photographs shall be sent to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. The investigating official of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner may take charge of any object or writing found on or near the body

which is deemed necessary for the purpose of establishing the cause and/or manner of death.

B. Upon conclusion of the investigation and determination that such objects or writings are no longer needed as evidence, the medical examiner or the medical examiner's designee may deliver them to the district attorney, law enforcement agency, or family for disposition.

C. The investigating medical examiner or the medical examiner's designee shall have access at all times to any and all medical and dental records and history of the deceased, including, but not limited to, radiographs and medical records, in the course of his or her official investigation to determine the cause and manner of death. Such records may not be released to any other person by the medical examiner, and the custodians of such records shall incur no liability by reason of the release of such records to the medical examiner.

D. 1. The body of the deceased shall be turned over to the funeral director designated by the person responsible for burial within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt of the decedent unless a longer period is necessary to complete the required investigation.

2. The investigation shall be concluded and the case completed within sixty (60) calendar days after the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner assumes custody of the body, unless circumstances exist that prevent adherence to this timeline.

SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 944.3 of Title 63, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. If, in the course of an investigation, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner declines to conduct an autopsy under Section 944 of Title 63 of the Oklahoma Statutes, the Office shall make a good faith effort to so inform the person legally entitled to the custody of the body of the deceased through a written or electronic notice upon or before release of the body. The notice shall contain:

1. A statement disclosing that an autopsy was not conducted;

2. The contact information of a family assistance coordinator as described in subsection C of this section;

3. A statement that the person may have the right to request a private autopsy at personal expense from an authorized physician or hospital under Section 1154 of Title 21 of the Oklahoma Statutes prior to the final disposition of the body; and

4. A statement that the person may request reports produced by the Office as provided by law upon conclusion of the investigation and completion of the case.

B. A licensed funeral director shall make a good faith effort to assist the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in implementing the requirements of subsection A of this section including, but not limited to, by providing the Office with the contact information of the person legally entitled to the custody of the body upon request by the Office.

C. The Office shall create a process by which the person legally entitled to the custody of a body or his or her representative may ask questions of, and receive responses from, a family assistance coordinator regarding the medicolegal investigation and other relevant topics within the purview of the Office.

SECTION 4. AMENDATORY 63 O.S. 2021, Section 947, is amended to read as follows:

Section 947. A. The certification of death of any person whose death is investigated under Section 931 et seq. of this title shall be made by the Chief Medical Examiner or his or her designee upon a medical examiner death certificate provided by the State Registrar of Vital Statistics. Such death certificates shall be valid only when signed by the Chief Medical Examiner or his or her designee. Copies of all such certificates shall be forwarded immediately upon receipt by the State Registrar of Vital Statistics to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. The final certification of death issued under this section shall be signed by the Chief Medical Examiner or his or her designee immediately upon conclusion of the investigation and completion of the case.

B. Any certification of death by an attending physician may be referred by the State Registrar of Vital Statistics to the Chief Medical Examiner for investigation and the amending of the original certificate of death by the filing of a medical examiner death certificate by the Chief Medical Examiner or his or her designee when the death is determined by the Chief Medical Examiner to be one properly requiring investigation under Section 938 of this title.

C. Medical examiner death certificates ~~will~~ shall not be required in cases investigated solely for the purpose of issuing a permit for transport of a body out of state.

SECTION 5. This act shall become effective November 1, 2024.

Passed the Senate the 22nd day of March, 2023.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Presiding Officer of the Senate

Passed the House of Representatives the 25th day of April, 2024.

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Presiding Officer of the House  
of Representatives

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Received by the Office of the Governor this \_\_\_\_\_

day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock \_\_\_\_\_ M.

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by the Governor of the State of Oklahoma this \_\_\_\_\_

day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock \_\_\_\_\_ M.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Governor of the State of Oklahoma

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Received by the Office of the Secretary of State this \_\_\_\_\_

day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock \_\_\_\_\_ M.

By: \_\_\_\_\_