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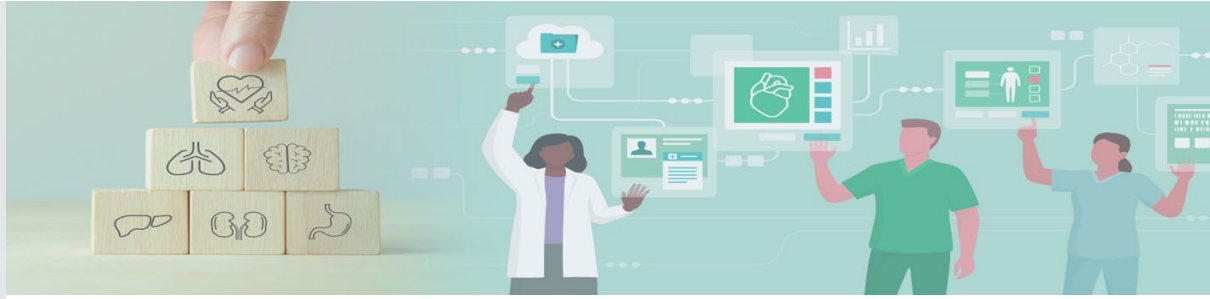
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White Paper

Information Sharing Between Medicolegal Death Investigation Offices and Organ and Tissue Recovery Organizations

Overview

On any given day, more than 100,000 people are waiting for organ donation in the United States (U.S.). With the help and lifesaving work of organ and tissue recovery organizations,^a a single organ donor can save up to eight lives while one tissue donor can improve 75 lives.^b Many potential donors fall under the jurisdiction of medicolegal death investigation offices^c, therefore these offices serve a critical role in organ and tissue donation processes. It is imperative to proactively establish cooperative relationships and information sharing between organ and tissue recovery organizations and medicolegal death investigation offices to ensure the best possible outcome for patients, families, and recovery organizations, and medicolegal death investigation offices. Federal laws and regulations have been enacted for the U.S. organ and tissue donation process.^d

Advantages/Benefits

Efficient information sharing between medicolegal death investigation offices and recovery organizations is mutually beneficial.

From Medicolegal Death Investigation Offices to Recovery Organizations

- Medicolegal death investigation offices may alert recovery organizations to deaths that occur outside of the hospital setting and may otherwise not be reported.
- Medicolegal death investigation offices may possess information that is critical for determination of donor eligibility. Prompt information sharing allows for expedited decision-making about potential donation and better resource management.
- Medicolegal death investigation offices with direct 24/7 electronic medical records access can respond most efficiently to recovery organization requests.

^a Organ and tissue donor organizations are referred to as “recovery organizations”.

^b Organ Donation Statistics. Health Resources & Services Administration. October 2023.

<https://www.organdonor.gov/learn/organ-donation-statistics>.

^c Medicolegal death investigation offices include medical examiner, coroner, and justice of the peace offices.

^d The Uniform Anatomical Gift Act (UAGA) was established in 1987 to facilitate the availability of organs for transplantation on a national scale. <https://www.uniformlaws.org/committees/community-home?CommunityKey=015e18ad-4806-4dff-b011-8e1ebc0d1d0f>.



From Recovery Organizations to Medicolegal Death Investigations

- Though recovery organizations are most often recipients of information provided by medicolegal death investigation offices, it is not uncommon for recovery organizations to possess information that is valuable to a death investigation.
 - Donor risk assessment interview information may be critical to the death investigation.
 - The recovery process may provide additional source of blood for testing, reveal additional physical exam findings or evidence pertinent to the death investigation.
 - Recovery organizations may possess names and contact information for family or other witnesses.
 - Recovery organizations may obtain independent radiographs, laboratory findings, or other diagnostic information.

Recommendations

Priority recommendations to ensure best possible collaborative outcomes are as follows:

- Recovery organizations and medicolegal death investigation offices should develop communication plans and policies that promote efficient and accurate information sharing and support timely and accurate decision-making.
- Medicolegal death investigation offices should support recovery organization efforts whenever possible by prioritizing prompt communication about potential donors and donor eligibility.
- Recovery organizations should prioritize consistent, accurate, and thorough information sharing with medicolegal death investigation offices to ensure both accurate cause and manner of death determinations and increase likelihood of donation approval.
- Recovery organizations can serve as a source of advocacy for medicolegal death investigation partners to obtain direct electronic access to medical records and through delivery of letters of support, such as provided in the *Forensic Technology Center of Excellence General Provider Resources: Medical Records for Medicolegal Death Investigations Toolkit* [\(Generic Example: Access the Electronic Medical Records Request\)](#).

Additional Resources

1. Bricker, B., Boyd, J., Collins, K. A., DeMatteo, J., Todd, C., Duncanson, E., Fudenberg, J., Keyes, K., Mackey, S., McCoy, K., Miller, C., Pepper, M., Philippy, B., Roser, T. J., Schunder, I., & Snippen, J. (2023, May). *Guide to Medical Examiner and Coroner Case* (2nd Ed.). American Association of Tissue Banks. <https://images.magnetmail.net/images/clients/AATB//attach/2023/Guide to ME and Coroner Cases 5 8 23.pdf>
2. National Association of Medical Examiners. (2019). *Position statement: Medical examiner release of organs and tissues for transplantation*. <https://www.thename.org/assets/docs/Organ%20and%20Tissue%20Statement%20July%202019.pdf>

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