

Wisconsin Legislative Council

Anne Sappenfield
Director



Joint Legislative Council's Study Committee on Uniform Death Reporting Standards

Amber Otis, Senior Staff Attorney
Kelly McGraw, Staff Attorney

July 18, 2022

Introduction

- ▶ Role of Legislative Council committee staff.
- ▶ Scope of the study committee's work.
- ▶ Description of distributed materials.

Filing of Death Record

- ▶ All deaths require creation of a death record.
- ▶ Information from various sources sent to DHS, which runs the office of vital records.
- ▶ Cause of death must be medically certified by a physician, coroner, or medical examiner.

Information in a Death Record

- ▶ Statutes specify 3 categories of information that must be in a death record:
 - Fact-of-death information (e.g. name, date, time, etc.)
 - Extended fact-of-death information (e.g. manner and cause of death)
 - Statistical-use-only information (e.g. health risk behaviors, race, educational background)
- ▶ Disclosure of identifiable data is limited, though de-identified data is used for statistical and other reports.

Death Investigations

- ▶ Not required for all deaths.
- ▶ Statutes specify that a coroner or medical examiner must investigate certain types of deaths.
- ▶ Investigation must determine the cause and manner of death.

Coroner or Medical Examiner

- ▶ Two roles perform the same functions with respect to death investigations.
- ▶ Coroners are elected constitutional officers, while medical examiners are appointed by a county board.
- ▶ Governed by the Wisconsin Constitution and state statutes.

Determining Cause of Death

- ▶ Cause of Death & Manner of Death
- ▶ Common investigatory tools, such as visiting incident scenes, conducting interviews, and reviewing records.
- ▶ The statutes authorize additional tools, such as subpoenaing documents, ordering autopsies, or requesting an inquest proceeding.
- ▶ Not all statutory investigatory tools are used frequently.

Questions?

- ▶ This was a basic overview; experts will be presenting at this and future meetings.
- ▶ We look forward to working with you!