



County of Bucks

OFFICE OF THE CORONER

Bucks County, Pennsylvania

850 Eagle Boulevard Warminster, PA 18974

Phone: (267) 880-5040

Fax (267) 880-5656

Meredith J. Buck, Coroner

March 30, 2020

RE: BUCKS COUNTY HOSPITAL & PHYSICIAN RECOMMENDATIONS

All of us are experiencing major changes in the way we work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Coroner's Office is no exception, as we are all presented with unprecedented risks that are difficult to mitigate. What remains the same is that all communicable diseases must be reported to the Coroner's Office.

Accordingly, all suspected and confirmed COVID-19 deaths must be reported to the Bucks County Coroner's Office using the following guidelines:

- Positive cases: The body will be released to the funeral home and the treating physician will issue the death certificate electronically via EDRS.
- Pending cases: The Coroner's Office will confirm that testing is done on the patient via communication with the hospital and/or the Department of Health. The Coroner's Office will electronically file the death certificate via EDRS as "Pending" and will need the Hospital Admission Record and the H&P forwarded to the Coroner's Office by way of facsimile. The body will remain on hold at the hospital for up to 48 hours until results are released by the laboratory. If wait time exceeds 48 hours, the Coroner's Office will communicate directly with the family and funeral home to have the body safely transferred to the care of a funeral director. Once the COVID-19 test results are back, please forward a copy to the Coroner's Office.
- Suspected cases (samples not yet taken): The Coroner's Office will have the hospital swab the patient and deliver specimens to the State Laboratory (unless they have inhouse testing). The Coroner/Deputy Coroner will review circumstances surrounding the death and determine Coroner jurisdiction and next steps:
 - For jurisdiction death, the body will be held in the hospital morgue for up to 48 hours to await results of COVID-19 test. If wait time exceeds 48 hours, contact the Coroner's Office and the determination will be

RECOMMENDATIONS
PAGE 2

made whether the body will be taken to Coroner's office and held for test results or released directly to the funeral home. The death certificate will be issued electronically by the Coroner's office.

- For non-jurisdiction death, the patient will be held in the hospital morgue for up to 48 hours to await the result of COVID-19 test and released to funeral home directly. The Coroner's Office will electronically file the death certificate via EDRS as "Pending". A copy of the final test results will be forwarded to the Coroner's Office via facsimile.

Please notify the Coroner's office as to which funeral home will be handling arrangements for the decedent.

Decedent Care: For confirmed or suspected COVID-19 deaths, the Coroner's Office recommends two un-damaged body bags per decedent with a wet barrier between the bags of using an EPA registered disinfectant for COVID-19. The outside of the exterior body bag is to be thoroughly cleaned and wiped with same disinfectant. The decedent is to be transferred to a cleaned gurney and sent to the morgue. For confirmed cases, a sticker or tag (or marker) should be affixed to the body bag to indicate COVID-19.

It is our goal to continue our essential public safety and public health functions as we carry out the necessary and legally mandated responsibilities of our office to the best of our ability and resources while minimizing the risk of spreading the virus in our community. We appreciate and share the concerns the pandemic is causing everyone and ask for your understanding, as the directives will most likely continue to change as we all adapt to this new reality.

Do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or concerns regarding the Coroner's Office and/or the recommendations set forth.

Very truly yours,



MEREDITH J. BUCK