

Deaths in Long-Term Care Homes

An information guide for families and loved ones

Ontario 

Deaths in long-term care homes

When a person dies in a long-term care home, the person in charge of the home must report the death to the Office of the Chief Coroner. If the coroner determines that the death should be investigated, they will investigate the circumstances of the death.

Engaging families is essential as their knowledge will inform the death investigation process. When deciding whether or not to conduct a death investigation, the coroner will engage with the family to determine if they have any concerns that should be addressed by an investigation.

This brochure provides a brief overview about the process of reporting a death in a long-term care home and is meant for general use only. For a legal description of coroners' duties, inquests and further information, read the Coroners Act online at: www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90c37

Reporting a death in a long-term care home

Long-term care homes report deaths to the Office of the Chief Coroner by submitting an Institutional Patient Death Record and, in some cases, by notifying the coroner directly.

The Institutional Patient Death Record acts as a screening tool to identify deaths in a long-term care home that require investigation by a coroner.

Autopsies

An autopsy, also known as a post mortem examination, is a process performed by a pathologist or forensic pathologist to examine a deceased person, including their internal organs, to help determine cause of death. The coroner, often in consultation with a forensic pathologist, will decide if an autopsy is needed.

The coroner will explain the need for an autopsy to the family and carefully assess concerns they may have. However, the coroner will proceed with ordering an autopsy if he or she believes it is needed to inform the death investigation. The coroner's decision is legal and binding.

Organ retention

In rare circumstances, an organ (usually the brain or heart) may need to be kept after an autopsy for further testing. During the autopsy, small tissue samples may also be kept for additional testing. The coroner will notify family members and ask for their direction about how the organ should be treated after this work is complete.

Organ or tissue donation

In cases where a coroner is involved, donation of organs or tissues may be possible. Families should advise the coroner of their wishes.

Obtaining death investigation results

The results of the death investigation can be shared with immediate family members or a personal representative, upon written request. Families may write to the Regional Supervising Coroner's office or complete and submit a request form. Forms can be obtained by contacting the applicable Regional Supervising Coroner office or by emailing: OCC.Inquiries@ontario.ca.

Reports are provided once the death investigation has concluded. Each death investigation is unique. The length of time needed to complete an investigation varies depending on its complexity, including the number of tests required. Family members should contact the investigating coroner or if necessary, the Regional Supervising Coroner's office for an update.

Obtaining a death certificate

Only the Office of the Registrar General of Ontario can issue a copy of a death certificate. In most cases, the Proof of Death forms prepared by the funeral service provider can serve as documentation if a death certificate is required, such as for financial institutions. To obtain an official death certificate please visit: www.ontario.ca/deathcertificate or call: 416-325-8305 or 1-800-461-2156 (toll free, Ontario only).

Inquests

An inquest may be called if a coroner decides that a public hearing on the circumstances of a death through an objective examination of facts would be beneficial. At the conclusion of an inquest, a five-person jury could make useful recommendations that may prevent deaths in similar circumstances.

Family Liaison Coordinator

The Family Liaison Coordinator helps families communicate with coroners, forensic pathologists and law enforcement personnel regarding a loved one's death. They also assist families in navigating through the various stages of the death investigation process.

To work with a Family Liaison Coordinator, contact:
OCC.Inquiries@ontario.ca

Questions

We're here to help. If you require additional information, please contact us. If English is not your first language, please ask the coroner if there are services or information available in your language of choice.

Contact

Office of the Chief Coroner & Ontario Forensic Pathology Service

25 Morton Shulman Avenue,
Toronto, ON M3M 0B1
Tel: 1-877-991-9959 (toll free, Ontario only)
or 416-314-4000
Fax: 416-314-4030
Email: **OCC.Inquiries@ontario.ca**
Website: **www.ontario.ca/coroner**

Public complaints

If you would like to file a complaint about a death investigation, please notify the Office of the Chief Coroner or the Ontario Forensic Pathology Service. Any concerns about a coroner can also be reported to the Regional Supervising Coroner. If you are still dissatisfied, you may contact the Death Investigation Oversight Council, which reviews certain types of complaints:

Death Investigation Oversight Council

25 Grosvenor Street, 15th floor
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1Y6
Tel: 1-855-240-3414 (toll-free) or 416-212-8443
Email: **DIOC@ontario.ca**
www.sse.gov.on.ca/mcscs/dioc/en/Pages/Complaints.aspx

Regional Offices

Central Region

Forensic Services and
Coroners Complex
25 Morton Shulman Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M3M 0B1
Fax: 647-329-2013

Central East

(Durham, Muskoka, York)
Tel: 647-329-1826
OCC.CentralEast@ontario.ca

Central West

(Halton, Peel, Simcoe)
Tel: 647-329-1825
OCC.CentralWest@ontario.ca

Toronto East

(Toronto, east of Yonge St.)
Tel: 647-329-1827
OCC.TorontoEast@ontario.ca

Toronto West

(Toronto, west of Yonge St.)
Tel: 647-329-1828
OCC.TorontoWest@ontario.ca

Eastern Region

Ottawa

(Lanark, Leeds & Grenville,
Stormont, Dundas &
Glengarry, Prescott-Russell,
Renfrew, Ottawa)
75 Albert St., Suite 701
Ottawa, ON K1P 5E7
Tel: 613-249-0055
Fax: 613-249-0918
OCC.Ottawa@ontario.ca

Kingston

(Northumberland, Haliburton,
Kawartha Lakes,
Peterborough, Frontenac,
Hastings, Lennox & Addington,
Prince Edward County)
366 King Street East, Ste. 440
Kingston, Ontario
K7K 6Y3
Tel: 613-544-1596
Fax: 613-544-3473
OCC.Kingston@ontario.ca

Western Region

London Office

(Bruce, Chatham-Kent, Elgin,
Essex, Grey, Huron, Lambton,
Middlesex, Oxford, Perth)
235 North Centre Rd., Ste. 303
London, Ontario
N5X 4E7
Tel: 519-661-6624
Fax: 519-661-6617
OCC.London@ontario.ca

Hamilton Office

(Brant, Dufferin, Haldimand,
Hamilton, Niagara, Norfolk,
Waterloo, Wellington)
119 King Street West, Floor 13
Hamilton, Ontario
L8P 4Y7
Tel: 905-546-8200
Fax: 905-546-8210
OCC.Hamilton@ontario.ca

Northern Region

Sudbury Office

(Algoma, Cochrane,
Manitoulin, Nipissing, Parry
Sound, Sudbury, Timiskaming)
199 Larch Street, Ste. 203
Sudbury, Ontario
P3E 5P9
Tel: 705-564-6149
Fax: 705-564-6155
OCC.Sudbury@ontario.ca

Thunder Bay Office

(Kenora, Rainy River,
Thunder Bay)
189 Red River Road, Floor 4
PO Box 4500
Thunder Bay, Ontario
P7B 6G9
Tel: 807-343-7663
Fax: 807-342-7665
OCC.ThunderBay@ontario.ca