



El Paso County Coroner's Office

Dear Patients and Families:

You may have been told by someone from Pikes Peak Hospice & Palliative Care that you or your loved one are a "coroner's case." That can be a frightening thing to hear; it need not be. Here is more information and answers to common questions.

In addition to situations involving deaths that are "violent or sudden unexpected deaths," we are required to collaborate with the coroner's office whenever a death may be a result of a "non-natural" cause such as a car accident, fall with major injury, suicide, etc. even when there might be a long time between the cause and eventual death. Medicine and public health need this information to help understand why people die and what can be done to help reduce preventable deaths. If you or your loved one have been identified as a "coroner's case" this means that something in your medical history (for example a recent fall with a head injury) triggered the need for extra review. Most of the time, additional information and discussion between the attending physician, a hospice physician, and the coroner's office helps clarify the situation and many people initially identified as "coroner's cases" are removed from the "coroner's case" list because a decision is made that death, when it occurs, is due to natural causes. Your Pikes Peak Hospice nurse can help keep you informed and answer any additional questions.

Even if the coroner is involved at time of death, Pikes Peak Hospice and the El Paso County Coroner's Office will treat you and your loved one with dignity and respect.

Please see more information below from the El Paso County Coroner's Office.

"Frequently Asked Questions

The El Paso County Coroner's Office extends our deepest sympathy to you during this difficult time. We hope that the information contained here will assist you by providing answers to commonly asked questions.

Q. WHY IS THE CORONER INVOLVED?

A. Colorado State Law requires that the Coroner be notified on certain deaths such as violent or sudden unexpected deaths. The Coroner must then determine the cause and manner of death.

Q. WHERE WILL MY LOVED ONE BE TAKEN?

A. If an autopsy is going to be done they will be taken to the El Paso County Coroner's Office. If an autopsy is not needed they will be picked up from their residence or hospital by the funeral home of the family's choice.

Q. WILL I BE CHARGED FOR THE SERVICES OF THE CORONER?

A. No.

Q. IS IT NECESSARY FOR ME TO GO TO THE MORGUE TO IDENTIFY THE BODY?

A. No. In most cases visual identification is not required. Should it become necessary for you to come in or if we need further information we will contact you.



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Q. HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE BEFORE MY LOVED ONE IS RELEASED FROM THE CORONER'S OFFICE?

A. Generally the investigation and autopsy, if needed, should be done within 48 hours. The funeral home that you choose will coordinate the release on your behalf.

Q. WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

A. The family needs to choose a funeral home to handle the final arrangements. After the choice is made you will need to contact our office (El Paso County Coroner) and inform us of your choice. When a funeral home is chosen they will set an appointment for you to meet with them and discuss your options. A list of funeral homes can be obtained from our office or can be found in the phone book.

Q. IF THERE ARE NO FUNDS FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS, WHAT CAN I DO?

A. The family can seek assistance from government and non-government sources. Your funeral director can give you that information.

Q. WHAT ABOUT ORGAN DONATION?

A. Organs (heart, lungs, liver, etc.) can only be obtained from someone who is declared brain dead in a hospital setting. Tissues (bone, heart valves and skin) and corneas can be obtained up to 24 hours after death. Our office can provide you with phone numbers of the appropriate agencies if you wish to have more information.

Q. HOW DO I OBTAIN A DEATH CERTIFICATE? A. Death Certificates are filed with the Office of Vital Statistics by the funeral homes. You can obtain copies from either the funeral home or the Office of Vital Statistics: 719-575-8492.

Q. HOW DO I OBTAIN COPIES OF REPORTS?

A. If an autopsy was performed by the El Paso County Coroner's Office and you would like a copy, you must request that one be mailed to you. Please call during office hours to make that request. If a law enforcement agency is investigating the death, you may obtain a copy of that report from that agency. **PLEASE NOTE:** It takes varying amounts of time to obtain these records and reports. Please ask officials when to expect the copies.

Q. HOW DO I OBTAIN THE PERSONAL POSSESSIONS?

A. Any personal possessions that were taken by the Coroner's Office will be inventoried and then released with the body to the funeral home. Any personal possessions that were taken by the law enforcement agency will be inventoried and can be released at the conclusion of the case."

Please discuss this information with a member of your Care Team if it causes you concern or if you have other questions.

Need more information or help? Call 633-3400 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to get live help. Thank you for letting us help care for you and your loved ones.