MaineHealth State of Maine Death Certificate Quick Tip Sheet

Key Reminders

- Maine law allows the medical certification of cause of death to be completed by a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician associate authorized to practice in Maine who has knowledge of the patient's recent medical condition. Enrollment is required - DAVE Enrollment Form for Death Certifiers and Staff.pdf
- Complete the Death Certificate (DC) in Database Application for Vital Events (DAVE) system before the decedent enters the morgue. State statute requires completion of DCs within 24hrs of death.
- Upon death, POA authority is replaced by the state's Next of Kin (NOK) hierarchy, unless otherwise specified in an advance directive. Title 22, §2843-A: Custody of remains of deceased persons
- Deaths that fall under the jurisdiction of the Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) are handled by the medical examiner (ME).

Directions for completing the Cause of Death Certificate:

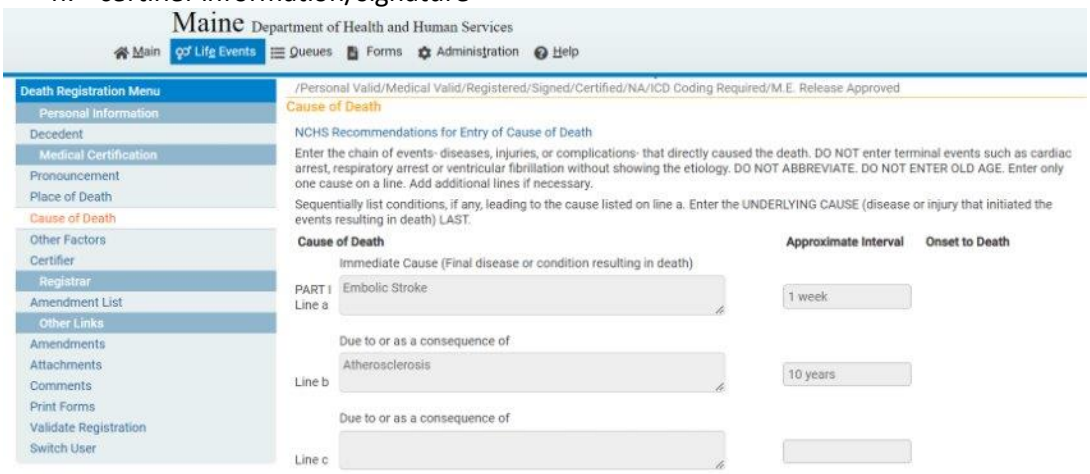
1. **Log on to DAVE system: https://gateway.maine.gov/EVRS_PROD_WEB/Logon.aspx**



2. **Choose "Life Events", then "Death", and "Start/Edit New Case"**



3. **Complete forms and follow directions provided within each page.** The provider is responsible for the medical portion, including items such as:
    a. date/time of death
    b. whether the case was referred to the medical examiner
    c. immediate and underlying causes of death
    d. manner of death
    e. tobacco-use information
    f. pregnancy-related information when applicable
    g. injury information when applicable
    h. certifier information/signature



DAVE/Medical Examiner may flag words that are unacceptable. DAVE will not allow you to "Save" or "Certify" the DC if the following flag words are used without *also listing the underlying etiology*. If there is no etiology, the ME is likely to require a resubmission which may delay family's funeral arrangements.

- Aspiration
- Hemorrhage
- Bleed
- Shock
- Seizure
- Encephalopathy
- Endocarditis
- Alcohol use (the words "use/abuse" are flagged; alcoholism or alcoholic cirrhosis will be accepted)
- Non-traumatic ("trauma" alone is flagged; must be one word to be accepted)

Additional causes should ALWAYS be listed for:

- Organ failure
- Infection
- Perforation, rupture, or obstruction
- Ischemia, embolism, or edema
- Pneumonia (requires careful documentation)
- Dysphagia (requires careful documentation)

Tip: if the exact cause is unknown:

- Use terms such as "probable", "presumed", or "complications of…" for the suspected cause
- Consider ending with: "of uncertain origin", "of unknown etiology"
- As a last resort, use "Nontraumatic" if you are certain the death is natural

4. Once the DC passes validation, the death is registered and receives a State File Number (SFN).

Hospital Autopsies

- Available for appropriate MaineHealth patient and performed at the MMC Portland campus only. Autopsies should only be ordered when cause of death is unknown or for special circumstances (e.g., COD unknown).
- A provider must:
    1. Complete the Autopsy Consent Form and send it to Decedent Affairs.
    2. Enter an EPIC order for autopsy.
- Decedent Affairs coordinates scheduling and assists with limited funeral home communications and with NOK/family to release the body. **Case discussions and family questions regarding the cause(s) of death and related factors are referred to the provider.**

Information Regarding Medical Examiner (ME) Cases

The Medical Examiner completes the death certificate for ME cases.

Examples of ME cases include:

- Trauma (accidental or intentional)
- Suspected neglect or abuse
- Drug use, misuse, or overdose (prescription or illicit)
- Patients with a state guardian
- Pediatric deaths
- Any death not due to natural causes

Need Help?

- DAVE Application Support and Help Desk:
  Contact Options:
    - Phone: 888-664-9491 (Option 7) or 207-287-5447
    - Email: vitalrecords.dhhs@maine.gov
    - Website: Database Application for Vital Events (DAVE) | Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention
- DC and Cause of Death Training Video: NCHS Training - Improving Cause-of-Death Reporting
- New England Donor Services: 877-584-7783 or 877-965-1234
- Vital Statistics (Maine) Help Desk: 888-664-9491
- Office of MAINE Chief Medical Examiner: 207-624-7180
- **MHMMC Decedent Affairs** – onsite/available weekdays, with light on call weekend/holiday coverage; responses will not be immediate outside normal business hours. Primary coverage location is MHMMC only.
  Contact Options:
    - Office phone: 207-662-3748.
    - EPIC Chat Group: DecedentAffairs
    - Email: DecedentAffairs@mainehealth.org