


## STATE REGISTRAR NOTICE

<b>Subject:</b> COVID-19 Funeral Assistance from FEMA	<b>Type:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Transitory	<b>Number:</b> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>2021-04</b></p>
<b>Date Issued:</b> April 9, 2021  <b>Date Effective:</b> April 9, 2021	<b>Audience:</b> All Death Stakeholders	<b>By Direction of:</b>  Audrey Marrocco State Registrar

Under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, FEMA will provide financial assistance for COVID-19-related funeral expenses incurred after January 20, 2020. Additional information on the COVID-19 Funeral Assistance initiative is available online at <https://www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus/economic/funeral-assistance>.

As part of FEMA’s application process, requestors must submit an official death certificate that indicates the decedent’s death was attributed to COVID-19. Therefore, applicants should request a comprehensive death certificate<sup>1</sup> instead of a standard death certificate.

Information on how to apply for a death certificate is available online at [www.certificates.health.pa.gov](http://www.certificates.health.pa.gov). All applicants must meet the Department of Health’s standard eligibility requirements.

### Certifying a Death Attributed to COVID-19

Medical professionals<sup>2</sup> should refer to [SRN 2020-13](#) for information on Reporting of Deaths Attributed to COVID-19. Coroners and medical examiners should refer to [SRN 2020-14](#) for this information. The reporting of deaths attributed to COVID-19 must adhere to the requirements as outlined in SRN 2020-13 or SRN 2020-14.

### Amending a Death Record to Add COVID-19 as Attributing to the Death

Any amendment to the medical portion of the death record must be submitted by the medical certifier that certified the case<sup>3</sup>. Death records will not be modified without proper medical certification and documentary evidence to add COVID-19 as attributing to the death<sup>4</sup>. Coroner or medical examiners who initially reported the death as pending investigation will be notified if

<sup>1</sup> See [SRN 2019-15](#) for more information on the types of death certificates available in Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> A medical professional is defined as a physician, certified registered nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or dentist.

<sup>3</sup> 28 Pa. Code § 1.37 (1).

<sup>4</sup> 28 Pa. Code § 1.31 (b).

documentary evidence is needed when amending a death record to report the cause of death following their investigation.

All medical certifiers should refer to [SRN 2020-17](#) for instructions on Amending Death Records. Medical certifiers requesting an amendment to add COVID-19 as attributing to the death must provide documentary evidence to support the request before the Bureau of Health Statistics and Registries (BHSR) will accept and process the amendment.

BHSR will not accept an updated copy of a Medical Certification Worksheet to process an amendment. All medical certifiers must adhere to the “Acceptable Methods of Requesting Amendments to Death Records” at outlined in [SRN 2020-17](#).

When requesting an amendment to a death record to add COVID-19 as attributing to the death, the following documentary evidence is required:

- If the death record is being amended to add COVID-19 as attributing to the death, then a positive Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) laboratory test result must be reported to the Department of Health.
  - For a decedent who was tested for COVID-19 in Pennsylvania, BHSR will verify that the positive PCR test result was reported to Pennsylvania’s National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (PA-NEDSS). If the lab result was not reported to PA-NEDSS, then the medical certifier must submit a copy of the PCR positive laboratory test result directly to BHSR.
  - For decedents who were tested for COVID-19 outside of Pennsylvania, the medical certifier should submit a copy of the PCR positive laboratory test result.
  - ***Please note that the presence of a positive PCR test result by itself does not demonstrate that the decedent’s death was attributed to COVID-19. The medical certifier must also attest that COVID-19 attributed to the death by formally submitting the death record amendment request.***
- If the death record is being amended to add Probable COVID-19 as attributing to the death, then the following documentary evidence is required:
  - If the death was certified by a medical professional, submit medical documentation (such as a medical record or a statement from the medical certifier) that supports the clinical diagnosis of COVID-19.
  - If the death was certified by a coroner or medical examiner, submit a report of the investigative findings whereby COVID-19 was determined to be a probable attributor of death. This documentary evidence is not routinely required when amending a death from pending investigation status. However, this documentary evidence is required if an amendment to the final cause of death previously reported is being amended.

**Contact Information:**

**For questions on FEMA’s Funeral Assistance initiative**, please visit <https://www.fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus/economic/funeral-assistance> for contact information once FEMA has established a call center for this initiative.

**For questions on amending a death record, contact the Death Registry Unit as follows:**

- By Phone: Vital Events Stakeholder Hotline at 800-323-9613
- By Email: EDRS Support: [RA-DHEDRS@pa.gov](mailto:RA-DHEDRS@pa.gov)

**For questions on ordering a death certificate**, please visit [www.certificates.health.pa.gov](http://www.certificates.health.pa.gov) or call 724-656-3100.