

Grieving the loss of a loved one can be very difficult. Grief support is available from the following agencies:

*Carousel 816.363.2600*

<http://www.kansascityhospice.org/>

*Solace House (grief support)*

*913.341.0318*

<http://www.solacehouse.org/>

*GriefNet includes many email support groups: kids-to-kids, grieving grandparents, grieving parents groups for parents categorized by nature of loss: accidents, twins, neonate, only child, suicide, SIDS, substance, etc.*

<http://www.griefnet.org>

*Growth House extensive resources on end-of-life resources, death and grief*

<http://www.growthhouse.org/>

*For an extensive list of resources please visit:*

<http://www.childrensmrcy.org/Content/uploadedFiles/Grief.pdf>

DCP 12/31/15



***“Our work is not only for the dead, but for the living too, for the survivors who have to go on with life. It’s for them, that we look so hard to find the truth.”***

***~ Odís C. Mack***

**Important Contact Information:**

Responding Medical Examiner

Medical Examiner: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

Responding Police Agency

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Officer: \_\_\_\_\_

Case #: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Information for Families**  
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**Jackson County Medical Examiner**

Interim Chief, Diane C. Peterson, M.D.

*On behalf of the Medical Examiner’s Office ,we would like to extend our condolences to you and your family during this difficult time.*

*The purpose of this pamphlet is to provide basic information and assist you with the necessary procedures following the death of a loved one.*



950 E. 21st Street  
Kansas City, Missouri 64108  
(816) 881.6600  
(816) 881.6641 fax  
[Jacksongov.org/medexam/](http://Jacksongov.org/medexam/)

## **Why is the Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) involved in this death?**

The Jackson County Medical Examiner has direct jurisdiction for Jackson, Clay, Cass and Platte Counties and is empowered by Missouri State Statutes # RSMo 58.720 to investigate deaths as a result of:

- Violence by homicide, suicide, or accident
- Thermal, chemical, electrical or radiation injury
- Criminal abortions, including those self-induced
- Disease of hazardous and contagious nature of which might constitute a threat to public health
- Any person who dies suddenly when in apparent good health.
- When unattended by a physician, chiropractor, or an Accredited Christian Science Practitioner, during a period of 36 hours immediately preceding death
- While in custody of the law, or while an inmate in public institution
- In any unusual or suspicious manner
- All child deaths involving individuals below the age of 18 years

## **Where will my loved one be taken?**

In some cases, the subject may be released to a funeral home after the initial scene investigation. In other cases, when further examination is necessary, the subject will be taken to the MEO in Kansas City, Missouri.

## **What do I do now?**

Select a funeral home or cremation facility, advise them the death is being investigated by the Medical Examiner. Then call the MEO to authorize your loved one's release. The funeral directors can assist you in making all arrangements for final disposition of your loved one, including obtaining the death certificate.

## **Where can I view my loved one?**

The decedent may be viewed at the funeral home once your loved one has been released from the MEO. Generally the decedent will be released within 24-48 hours. However some situations do take longer.

## **Do I need to make a visual identification of my loved one?**

Generally, visual identification is made on scene by family or friends; however if this is not the case, identification can be made through other methods such as fingerprints, dental comparison, x-ray comparison, and photo comparison.

## **What is an autopsy?**

A medical examiner autopsy is an examination of a person's body and internal organs after death by a board certified forensic pathologist. The function of the autopsy is to identify and document the presence or absence of disease and/or injuries that can explain an individual's death. An autopsy accompanies investigation of the circumstances of death, medical history, and toxicology testing. The cause and manner of death are determined by synthesis of investigative, historical, and autopsy information.

## **Is an autopsy going to be performed and is there a charge?**

Autopsies are not performed on all cases. The forensic pathologist decides if an autopsy will be performed to assist in determining the cause and manner of death. This service is free of charge to the family.

## **What are the benefits of an autopsy?**

- May fulfill a legal mandate of state statutes
- May assist families in finalizing your loved one's affairs, such as insurance claims and death benefits
- May reveal genetic or inherited diseases
- May be needed to determine the extent of injuries, recover evidence and specimens for toxicology.

## **I would like to have my loved one's organs/tissues donated. Will the medical examiner help me with this process?**

At the Jackson County Medical Examiner's Office, one of our goals is to facilitate organ and tissue donation for the benefit of the family and community. In all but the rarest of cases, donation does not interfere with the Medical Examiner's duties. The local Organ Procurement Organization is Midwest Transplant Network ([www.mwtn.org](http://www.mwtn.org); 913.262.1668).

The MEO will notify MTN of the death. If your loved one qualifies for donation, an MTN representative will contact you for more information.

## **How do I recover personal effects?**

Generally clothing and personal effects will be released to the funeral home or cremation facility with the decedent. However, under certain circumstances clothing and personal effects may be considered evidence and are released to law enforcement.

## **How do I obtain a copy of the death certificate?**

The death certificate can be obtained from the funeral home, cremation facility, or from Vital Records at the local branch, or health department.

## **How can I get a copy of the autopsy report?**

The family can request a copy of the autopsy report by submitting a request in writing via mail or fax. Please include the following:

- Decedent's full name
- Decedent's date of death
- Decedent's date of birth
- Your relationship to the decedent
- State that you are requesting a copy of the autopsy report
- Include your return address and contact number

## **What does it mean if a case is listed as "pending"?**

Generally a case is pending because the MEO is waiting for the results from various tests that are performed, such as toxicology. Until all testing results are received, the death certificate may not be completed. A death certificate may take up to 8 weeks to complete. The forensic pathologist will write a letter confirming the date of death if requested by the family prior to the official death certificate completion.