



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES

DAVID L. LAKEY, M.D.
COMMISSIONER

1100 W. 49th Street • Austin, Texas 78756
1-888-963-7111 • <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us>

Dear Physician:

Texas statutes dictate specific timeframes for completion, filing and registering of a death certificate. Funeral directors are required to file death certificates with the local registrar within 10 days of the date of death. Physicians are to complete the medical certification information on the record and return it to the funeral director within 5 days of receipt. The 5 days maximum allotted to the medical certifier are part of the 10 days total allotted to the funeral director. This is required by Chapter 193.005(b) of the Texas Health and Safety Code (HSC).

Failure to complete the medical certification information and make the certificate available to the funeral director for filing or failure to provide the reason for the delay within 5 days is a Class C misdemeanor. [HSC §195.004]

You may designate an associate physician or the chief medical officer of the institution where the death occurred to certify under the following conditions: 1) you are unavailable, but agree to allow another physician to certify, 2) the person who certifies the death record has access to the medical history of the case, and 3) the death is due to natural causes. In an exceptional case when the medical certification can not be completed within 5 days, you must notify the funeral director of the reason for the delay. [HSC §193.005(g)]

The death certificate is an important legal document, as well as a valuable source of public health information. If you have any questions, please contact Harvey Browning, Vital Registration Branch Manager at (512) 458-7111 x2505 or email Harvey.browning@dshs.state.tx.us

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Geraldine R. Harris".

Geraldine R. Harris
State Registrar
Texas Vital Statistics