



## Information for Family and Friends

### Sandusky County Coroner's Office

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On behalf of the Sandusky County Coroner's Office, may we offer our deepest sympathy to you and your family during this difficult time. In order to assist you, it is our hope that the information contained in this pamphlet will provide answers to some of the questions and concerns that you may have.

### **1. Why is the Coroner's Office involved?**

Ohio law requires the County Coroner to investigate the circumstances and determine the cause and manner of death of all deaths that are:

- Sudden, when a person is in apparent good health
- Not under the care of a physician
- The result of violence or trauma
- Unlawful or due to criminal neglect

### **2. What is an autopsy?**

An autopsy is a systematic examination of the body of a deceased person by a qualified forensic pathologist. The performance of an autopsy does not interfere with having the body viewed at a funeral. The body is inspected for the presence of disease or injury; specimens of the vital organs and/or body fluids may be taken for microscopic, chemical, or other tests. A written record is made of the autopsy findings including the microscopic and laboratory test, and the reports of consultants. Copies of these reports are available upon request by the next-of-kin or other authorized individuals.

### **3. Why might an autopsy be performed?**

Autopsies are routinely performed to determine the cause and manner of death in most cases listed in question 1. In the cases where the actual cause of death is unclear or due to unusual circumstances, such as homicide, suicide, or where concerns of foul play are raised, an autopsy can be ordered, by law, by the Coroner. Objections by the

family can be based on religious beliefs. Objections to autopsy which are not based on religious beliefs have no standing in the law, ORC 313.131.

#### **4. Will I still be able to have an open casket service if an autopsy is performed?**

YES- Autopsies are performed in a professional manner with dignity and respect that does not interfere with the viewing. If a person could be viewed before an autopsy, they will be viewable afterward.

#### **5. Why is my loved one being transported to Lucas County Coroner's Office?**

Sandusky County is one of many counties in the Northwest Ohio area to be serviced by Lucas County. Lucas County, due to population size, has the resources to be able to have forensic pathologies to perform autopsies.

#### **6. How long will it take before my loved one is released from the Coroner's Office jurisdiction?**

Depending on what time of day the Coroner's Office is notified and takes jurisdiction, the medical information available and the circumstances surrounding the death, the deceased may be released the same day or later the following day. In cases of suspicious deaths or deaths that require further investigation, your loved one may be held for additional time and will be released as promptly as possible.

#### **7. Who contacts the funeral home or cremation facility?**

Once you have selected a funeral home or cremation facility, please let them know that the deceased is under the jurisdiction of the Lucas County Coroner's Office. The funeral home will call the Coroner's Office as soon as possible to inform us of your choice.

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

The Coroner's Office does not issue copies of the death certificate. Copies can be requested from the funeral home or cremation facility when arrangements are made. As a courtesy to the family, funeral homes may offer to obtain certificates from the Health Department. Additional copies may be obtained directly from the Health Department for a fee.

#### **9. When will the final autopsy report be ready and how do I obtain a copy?**

The final autopsy summary and toxicology report is generally available in about 3 months (or possibly more) from the date of death. Other studies and further testing can take longer.

NOTE: The availability of reports generated may take longer depending on the circumstances of the case.

#### **10. What does "pending" mean on a death certificate?**

Occasionally additional information, like further extensive testing or studies are required to accurately determine a cause and manner of death. A death certificate with "pending" as the cause of death still allows your family to make immediate funeral arrangements. The final death certificate will be issued upon completion of the investigation from the chosen funeral home or cremation facility.

#### **11. What should I do now?**

A possible funeral home or cremation facility should be selected to handle final disposition arrangements for the deceased. When you contact the funeral home or cremation facility director, advise them that the deceased is under

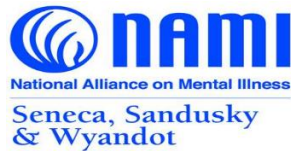
the Lucas County Coroner's Office jurisdiction. The director will, in turn, contact the office and make arrangements to pick up your loved one.

## Additional Resources

Although the Sandusky County Coroner's Office does not endorse any company, we understand you may need help finding resources.



**Mental Health and Recovery Services Board**  
**(419) 448-0640**



**NAMI Northwest Ohio**  
**(419) 334-8021**



**ServPro**  
**(419) 595-0355**

NOTE: Contact your insurance provider to see what may or may not be covered.



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