



**WESTMORELAND COUNTY
OFFICE OF THE CORONER**

2503 South Grande Boulevard

Greensburg, PA 15601

Phone: (724) 830-3636 Fax: (724) 830-3064

www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/coroner

Kirk E. Nolan
Chief Deputy

Kenneth A. Bacha
Coroner

Jeffrey D. Monzo
Solicitor

July 21, 2021

Effective August 1, 2021, the Westmoreland County Office of the Coroner will no longer provide transport services for storage cases that do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Coroner for investigative purposes. If a deceased is located at your facility, all efforts shall be exhausted by your agency to locate next of kin for disposition instructions.

In the event there is no disposition resolution, the Coroner's Office can be contacted at (724) 830-3636 to report the death and arrange storage and disposition. The deceased must be transported to the county morgue after report of all necessary death information.

It is the responsibility of your agency to arrange for transport and ensure the deceased is tagged on the body and body bag. The Coroner's Office will not accept personal items to include any jewelry on the body. All associated costs from the transport agency is the responsibility of your agency. The Coroner's Office must be given advanced notice of the transport in order to have personnel available to receive the decedent.

Kenneth A. Bacha, Coroner
Westmoreland County

WESTMORELAND COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE
2503 SOUTH GRANDE BOULEVARD
GREENSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 15601
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All persons involved in death investigations, including law enforcement officials, emergency personnel, hospital personnel, nursing/personal care home personnel and funeral directors, should follow the following guidelines. The list provided is by no means exhaustive. My staff is available to assist with any questions you may have. In any death case, WHEN IN DOUBT, CALL THE CORONER.

Sincerely,
Kenneth A. Bacha, Coroner

GUIDELINES TO BE FOLLOWED IN DEATH CASES

- A. The Coroner, Chief Deputy Coroner or Deputy Coroner having view of the body, shall investigate the facts and circumstances concerning deaths WHICH APPEAR TO HAVE OCCURRED WITHIN THE COUNTY, REGARDLESS WHERE THE CAUSE THEREOF MAY HAVE OCCURRED, for the purpose of determining whether or not an autopsy should be conducted or an inquest thereof should be had in the following cases:
- (1) Sudden death not caused by readily recognizable disease, or wherein a physician on the basis of prior medical attendance cannot properly certify the cause of death.
 - (a) **SUDDEN DEATH DEFINED:** The Coroner shall regard any death as sudden if it occurs without prior medical attendance by a person who may lawfully execute a certificate of death in this Commonwealth, or if, within twenty-four hours of death, the decedent was discharged from such medical attendance or a change of such medical attendance had occurred, or if any such medical attendance began within twenty-four hours of death and the medical attendant refuses or is unable to certify the cause of death. Medical attendance includes hospitalization. (The provisions stated above regarding sudden death shall not be construed to affect the Coroner's discretion as to whether or not any death was suspicious, nor shall they be construed to authorize a Coroner to investigate a sudden death any further than necessary to determine cause and manner of death).
 - (2) Death occurring under suspicious circumstances including those where alcohol, drugs or other toxic substances may have a direct bearing on the death.
 - (3) Death occurring as a result of violence or trauma, whether apparently homicidal, suicidal or accidental (including but not limited to, those due to mechanical, thermal, chemical, electrical or radiation injury, drowning, cave-ins and subsidence).
 - (4) Any death in which trauma (falls or fractures), chemical injury, asphyxia, exposure, fire related, drug overdose or reaction to drugs or medical treatment was a **PRIMARY** or **SECONDARY**, **DIRECT** or **INDIRECT**, **CONTRIBUTORY**, **AGGRAVATING** or **PRECIPITATING** cause of death.
 - (5) Operative and peri-operative death in which the death is not readily explainable on the basis of prior disease.
 - (6) Any death wherein the body is unidentified or unclaimed.
 - (7) Deaths known or suspected as due to contagious disease and constituting a public health hazard.
 - (8) Deaths occurring in a prison or penal institution or while in the custody of the police.
 - (9) Deaths of persons whose bodies are to be cremated, buried at sea or otherwise disposed of so as to be thereafter unavailable for examination.
 - (10) Any sudden, infant death.
 - (11) Stillbirth.
 - (12) **ALL** emergency room, residence, personal care and assisted living (including **ALL** hospice).
- B. The purpose of an investigation shall be to determine the cause of any such death and to determine whether or not there is sufficient reason for the Coroner to believe that any such death may have resulted from criminal acts or criminal neglect of persons other than the deceased.
- C. **UNCLAIMED BODY – Hospitals, nursing homes and personal care homes are required to contact a body donation registry as soon as they realize they have an unclaimed body, but not longer than 36 hours after the death. The County will not accept an unclaimed body because the healthcare or personal care facility failed to notify a body donation registry on time and failure to do so makes that facility responsible for all arrangements for the disposition of the remains.**
- D. In all cases where the Coroner has jurisdiction to investigate the facts and circumstances of a death, **THE BODY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS SHALL REMAIN UNTOUCHED** until the Coroner, Chief Deputy Coroner or Deputy Coroner has had a view thereof or until he shall otherwise direct or authorize (Section 120, County Code, Amended 11/29/90, P.L. 602, No. 152) and the laws of the Commonwealth provide that the Coroner shall take custody of all personal effects which appear to have been **ON** or **ABOUT** the person at the time of death until lawfully claimed by proper persons. Care should be taken in gathering of these effects in order to facilitate identification of the deceased and further any police investigation that may be in progress.

TO REPORT A CORONER'S CASE
24 HOURS A DAY – 7 DAYS A WEEK
CALL (724) 830-3636

If the Deputy is out of the office, calls will automatically forward to the Department of Public Safety (911) after six rings. They will contact the appropriate person or provide instructions to do so.

Disposition Options Of Unclaimed Bodies

- **Body Donation**
 - Humanity Gifts Registry (call first)
 - 215-922-4440 or 215-925-7469
 - If no answer call Musmanno Funeral Home 412-331-0900
 - International Institute for the Advancement of Medicine (IIAM)
 - Angela Pomykala 888-496-7033
 - www.iiam.org
 - Lifequest Anatomical
 - Vladimir Sarlat 866-799-2300
 - www.lifequestanatomical.com
 - Anatomy Gifts Registry
 - Pat Rigby 800-300-5433 or 410-553-0525
 - Science Care
 - (800) 417-3747

- *****Cremation authorization is required for ALL bodies donated to science**

- **Embalming**
 - Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science (PIMS)
 - 412-362-8500
 - www.pims.edu
 - PIMS will handle all transportation arrangements

- **Pennsylvania Department of Human Services**
 - Verify eligibility by calling Janice Dominic-(Supervisor) 724-832-5244
 - Alexis McCoy 724-832-5224
 - Mary Porterfield 724-832-5261
 - Elise Gwynn 724-832-5224

- **Veteran Affairs**
 - Verify veteran status by calling 800-827-1000

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 835
Philadelphia, PA
19105-0835

PHONE: (215) 922-4440
FAX: (215) 922-4896
EMAIL: info@hgrpa.org
WEBSITE: www.hgrpa.org

HUMANITY GIFTS REGISTRY

GUIDELINES FOR UNCLAIMED REMAINS IN PENNSYLVANIA

YOU MUST FIRST NOTIFY YOUR COUNTY CORONER/ MEDICAL EXAMINER

Unclaimed Remains:

A body which has not been claimed by next of kin, friend, or responsible person(s) for disposition and is still in your institution's morgue after 36 hours of the occurrence of death.

If there is known next of kin and they have been informed of the death, yet still have not had a funeral director pick up remains at the hospital and 36 hours have passed; such remains are considered unclaimed and must be reported to Humanity Gifts Registry.

Pennsylvania Law (ACT NO.303 of 1883) required that your institution notify the Registry office once 36 hours have passed and the remains of a deceased are still in your facility's morgue.

Exceptions:

Any persons dying with the following conditions are unacceptable: AIDS, ANY FORM OF HEPATITIS, HIV, ACTIVE TUBERCULOSIS, GANGRENE, OBESITY, SURGERY PRIOR TO DEATH WHICH HAS NOT HEALED, CRUSHING INJURIES, BURNED IN FIRE, SEVERE CONTRACTURES OF LIMBS, MRSA, C-DIFF, OR ANY STAPH INFECTIONS. WE DO NOT ACCEPT AUTOPSIED BODIES.

*Due to current trends in the COVID-19 outbreak, Humanity Gifts Registry will be increasing the level of caution that we are taking when screening deceased donors for coronavirus infections. Any donor residing outside of their private residence at the time of their passing will not be accepted without conclusive documentation that they have tested negative for COVID-19 within 5 days of their passing and were not showing any symptoms of the virus. HGR regrets any inconvenience this may cause our donors and their families, and we will hopefully be able to ease these restrictions in the future. However during this outbreak, we will be exercising an abundance of caution in order to protect the safety of our schools' staff, faculty, and students.



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The remains of any veteran are not to be sent to the Humanity Gifts Registry. It is the responsibility of the hospital personnel to contact the Veterans Administration with the deceased's social security number to find out veterans status. All veterans with honorable discharge are to be buried by the Veterans Administration.

In addition, we do not take bodies of people under 18 years of age, nor any fetal remains.

Procedure to notify HGR of Unclaimed Remains:

Once 36 hours have passed and the remains of the individual are still in your morgue, you must call our office immediately. We will ask for the condition of remains to be sure of acceptability. The following information should be available during your report: name of deceased, last known address, date of birth, social security number, marital status, veteran status, last known weight, cause of death and other medical conditions. We will ask what steps have been taken to try and locate next of kin. We will ask that you document this investigation in writing. This letter must be faxed to our office (215-922-4896) and the doctor must sign the death certificate before we will remove the remains (no later than the 4th day after death).

What if there is a next of kin who say they will make funeral arrangement, but do not follow through and 36 hours have passed?

The family must be contacted and informed that if a funeral director does not pick up the body, it will be released to the Humanity Gifts Registry. It must be explained that your hospital is following the law regarding this matter.

An unclaimed body is not used for anatomical study for 30 days after the medical school receives it. However, the remains will most likely be placed through the embalming process during this time. If a family is able to make arrangements for a private funeral after we have received the remains, they just need to call our office and retain the service of a funeral director. The family will then be responsible for all cost we have incurred.

Failure to Notify HGR at 36 hours of Unclaimed Remains:

If your institution fails to notify this office of an unclaimed body at 36 hours, the Humanity Gifts Registry is under no obligation to accept the remains. We will **not** issue an unfit certificate to any facility for the Coroner/ Medical Examiner's office to take care of these remains. The County is under no obligation to dispose of any remains refused by

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HUMANITY GIFTS REGISTRY

the Registry due to the Failure of the institution to contact this office or provide this office with all the information needed (refer to page one) within the timely manner.

Unfit Certificates are only issued for the remains that are unfit or unacceptable for our medical schools (Refer to page one under "Exceptions"). Calls Regarding these deaths must still be made at 36 hours after death.

When an unclaimed death occurs on a weekend/holiday or when 36 hours is up during the weekend/holiday:

We have an answering service, so your facility may call our office anytime after hours to report unclaimed remains. Inform them of the Name of Deceased, date and time of death and who is to be contacted during the next weekly business day for further information. We will contact you during the next business day to make arrangements. If you do not hear from us, please call back. The unclaimed remains are your institution's responsibility.

ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING UNCLAIMED REMAINS MAY BE DIRECTED TO OUR OFFICE DURING BUSINESS HOURS OF 8AM-3PM MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY. (215) 922-4440.

**PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTION BEFORE
COMPLETING THE DONOR FORMS FOR BODY DONATION:
THIS IS A PRE-REGISTRATION FOR YOURSELF**

- 1) Complete two Uniform Donor forms, having both witnessed by two persons aged 18 or older.
- 2) Return one copy to our office at the P.O. Box address on the card.
- 3) Keep your copy in a safe place that is accessible for family members. DO NOT place in bank vault.
- 4) Discuss this donation with your immediate family members and your physician. They will then be aware of your wishes and be able to contact our office to carry them out.
- 5) Give instruction sheet and copies of your signed donor forms to next of kin, executor of estate or other persons who will be responsible for notification of your death to the Registry.
- 6) Be sure a COPY of the Uniform Donor Form is placed on your chart if you should ever enter the hospital or nursing home.
- 7) Your Donor form will remain on file until your death. There is NO NEED to renew the card or update changes of address with our office. Our office will obtain all relevant information at the time of death.
- 8) If you wish to cancel the donation in the future, please contact us in writing and we will remove your file from our records. We will NOT take a cancellation request over the phone.
- 9) IF DEATH OCCURS OUTSIDE OF PENNSYLVANIA, N.J. OR DELAWARE, medical personnel or your family is to contact the nearest medical school or Anatomy Board to make the donation in that State. We will not make arrangements for your body to come back to Pennsylvania.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Area Code 215
922-4440
925-7469
FAX 922-4896



P.O. Box 835
Phila., PA 19105-0835

HUMANITY GIFTS REGISTRY

DONOR FORM

OF _____
(PRINT OR TYPE NAME OF DONOR)

In the hope that I may help others, I hereby donate my body,
if medically acceptable, to the Humanity Gifts Registry,
P.O. Box 835, Philadelphia, PA 19105
for anatomical study and research.
Please notify the Registry upon my death.*
***Phone (215) 922-4440 (24 hours)**

SIGNATURE _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

DATE SIGNED _____

ADDRESS _____

WITNESSES:

1) _____

2) _____

**THIS IS A LEGAL DOCUMENT UNDER THE
UNIFORM ANATOMICAL GIFT ACT OR
SIMILAR LAWS.**

**PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTION BEFORE
COMPLETING THE CONSENT FORM FOR BODY DONATION:**

THIS FORM IS FOR SOMEONE WHO IS ALREADY DECEASED.

- 1) Only the **legal** next of kin can authorize this consent form.
- 2) Complete the Consent for Body Donation form, having both witnessed by two persons aged 18 or older. We will not accept an incomplete consent form.
- 3) Fax us a copy, at 215-922-4896.
- 4) If you are requesting for your loved ones ashes to be returned to the family, a written request must be mailed to our office within a couple of months after the donor's death.
- 5) IF DEATH OCCURS OUTSIDE OF PENNSYLVANIA, N.J. OR DELAWARE, medical personnel or your family is to contact the nearest medical school or Anatomy Board to make the donation in that State. We will not make arrangements for your body to come back to Pennsylvania.

You do not have to fill this out if a donor form/ donor card is on file

Please feel free to contact our office, 215-922-4440, with any question.

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HUMANITY GIFTS REGISTRY

CONSENT FOR TOTAL BODY DONATION

I _____, being the nearest next of kin of
(please print your name)

_____ (_____)
(Name of deceased) relationship to deceased

consent and agree to the donation of the whole body to the Humanity Gifts Registry of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (HGR). It will be used for anatomical study and/or research under the auspices or with the approval of a member school of the HGR.

I also understand that the HGR may not be able to accept all donations. Examples of bodies which may be declined include but are not limited to those which have infectious or contagious diseases; are autopsied, decomposed, or obese; had recent surgery prior to death, crushing injuries in an accident, or severe contractures of limbs.

I understand, agree, and accept that studies might take up to two years, and possibly longer, for completion, and that final disposition will be cremation. I further understand, agree, and accept that no reports will be provided to the family and that there is no commitment to perform studies in regard to any particular disease.

I understand that if the cremated remains are to be returned to the family at the conclusion of the studies, it is mandatory that the next of kin notify the HGR office in writing within a month of the death of the donor. There will be no exceptions to the necessity of requesting the return in writing.

The HGR will pay \$100.00 toward the transportation cost, and I will accept responsibility for costs beyond that amount.

PLEASE COMPLETE WITH SIGNATURE, DATE, ADDRESS AND TWO (2) WITNESSES

Signature of nearest next of kin Date

Street Address

City, State, Zip Phone Number

Witness Witness