

Pronouncement of Death, Certification and Reporting Standards for Nurse Practitioners

(Not in effect until approved)

Purpose

This standard applies to nurse practitioners (NPs), neonatal NPs, **GRADUATE NURSE PRACTITIONERS**¹(GNP), and neonatal GNPs herein referred to as registrants. The purpose of this standard is to outline registrants' responsibilities following a **PATIENT'S** death, including the **PRONOUNCEMENT OF DEATH**, legal reporting requirements and documentation. This standard applies in all settings where registrants may be involved in pronouncing death, notifying the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), or completing the medical certificate of death.

Criteria

To meet this standard, registrants must meet the following criteria.

The registrant must

1. Comply with all applicable legislation and regulations related to the reporting, investigation, and certification of death.
2. Notify appropriate members of the **HEALTHCARE TEAM** based on the care context.
3. Immediately notify the office of the OCME when a death is reportable under the *Fatalities Inquiries Act*. Reportable deaths include, but are not limited to:
 - 3.1. unexpected or unexplained deaths
 - 3.2. deaths related to violence, accident, or suicide (actual or suspected)
 - 3.3. maternal deaths during or following pregnancy that may be related to the pregnancy
 - 3.4. deaths that may be related to improper or negligent treatment

¹ Words and phrases displayed in BOLD CAPITALS upon first mention are defined in the Glossary

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- Time of death
- Assessment finding supporting pronouncement of death
- Required forms completed
- All notification made

11. Recognize that death of a patient may involve autopsy, organ, or tissue donation processes and ensure that actions taken do not interfere with legislated or authorized post-mortem procedures.

Glossary

GRADUATE NURSE PRACTITIONER - A graduate of an approved nurse practitioner (NP) program who is on the provisional register and is in the process of meeting the College of Registered Nurses of Alberta NP registration requirements. These individuals may be graduates from an approved NP program leading to initial NP registration or internationally educated NPs.

HEALTH-CARE TEAM - Members of the intraprofessional and/or interprofessional team and/or community supporting patient care. This also includes students, new learners, Indigenous and traditional healers. (College of Nurses of Ontario [CNO], 2023)

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING (MAID) – Means “(a) the administering by a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner (NP) of a substance to a person, at their request, that causes their death; or (b) the prescribing or providing by a medical practitioner or NP of a substance to a person, at their request, so that they may self-administer the substance and in doing so cause their own death” (*Criminal Code*, 1985).

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH – “The legal record of a person’s death and its circumstances, completed at the time of death by a medical professional or other authorized person” (Government of Canada, 2017).

MOST RESPONSIBLE PRACTITIONER (MRP) - The regulated health professional designated as having overall responsibility for directing and coordinating a patient’s care. In primary care, the MRP is typically the patient’s ongoing primary care nurse practitioner or physician. In other settings, such as hospitals, the MRP may be the registrant responsible for a defined episode of care.

PATIENT(S) - The term patient(s) refers to clients, residents, families, groups, communities and populations who receive medical care, treatment or professional services from a registrant.

PRONOUNCEMENT OF DEATH – The determination of death through physical assessment findings.

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References

College of Nurses of Ontario. (2023). *Code of conduct*. https://www.cno.org/globalassets/docs/prac/49040_code-of-conduct.pdf

Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c C-46. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/>

Government of Canada. (2017). *Archived guidelines for death certificates*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/health-system-services/guidelines-death-certificates.html>

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