



**Dayton &
Montgomery
County**

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Death Certificate Completion Guide



The information provided here is intended to serve as a resource and tool for you and your staff to use during your completion of a death certificate. Please help us provide the best service possible by following the process outlined below and by fully completing the death certificates.

Certificate Standards

Successful filing of a death certificate requires that all sections of the document are properly completed. Here are a few questions to ask yourself before signing.

- ✓ Is the certificate fit to the size of the paper?
- ✓ Are there any markings on the document such as email indicators, fax numbers, or lines that obstruct the information?
- ✓ Is the certificate printed clearly and suitable for reproduction?
- ✓ Is the date of disposition before the permit date?

Fetal Deaths

A Fetal Death Record is created only for pregnancy outcomes that do not show signs of life (fetus does not take a breath). Fetal death records are mandatory for gestational age greater than or equal to 20 weeks. For gestational ages under 20 weeks, filing is not mandatory by Ohio Revised Code (ORC). Hospitals may work directly with the parents to complete the paperwork and dispose of the remains.

Essential Field on a Fetal Death Record

1. The gestational age (Field 18D)
2. The estimated time of fetal death (Field 18E)
3. The date of last normal menses (Field 32)
4. The name of attendant and date completed



Physician Signature on Certificate

According to ORC 3705.16, the certificate of death shall be completed and signed by the physician who attended the decedent or by the coroner or medical examiner, as appropriate within a 48-hour period.

Getting Physician to Sign

The physician in charge of the patient's care for the illness or condition that resulted in death must complete the medical certification. Before you decline to sign, ask the following:

- ✓ Has the patient been seen or prescription provided within the last 30-90 days?
- ✓ Is this a medical examiner case; was the case waved and accepted by the Coroner?

Electronic Death Certifier

Ohio physicians have the ability to electronically complete and sign/certify the cause of death via the Electronic Death Registration System or EDRS. Making the decision to certify deaths electronically reduces the burden of tracking paper death records and reduces in-person contact. To get started click the link below:

[Electronic Death Certification Information](#)