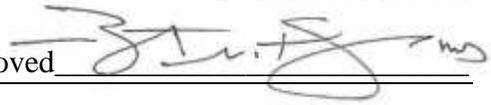


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TITLE: RELEASE PROTOCOL

Policy: The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) is responsible for releasing decedents held within the facility to a licensed funeral director following the written authorization pursuant to DC Code § 5-1411.

Purpose: To ensure efficient and timely release of decedents to authorized licensed funeral directors.

Scope: The following procedure is to assist the ID, Mortuary, and Investigations Units in the proper and efficient release of decedents stored at the OCME.

1. Authorization of Decedent Release

1.1. The ID Unit staff receives via fax (or in person) a completed Authorization to Release a Body form from a funeral home.

1.1.1. Only the OCME standardized Authorization to Release a Body form is accepted from a funeral home.

1.1.2. Alternative forms requesting the release of a decedent are rejected.

1.2. The ID Unit staff places the form in the case chart and forwards the chart to Investigations.

1.3. Investigator cross checks the OCME standard Authorization to Release Form with the case information, confirming the form is in the correct case chart and write the case number on the form.

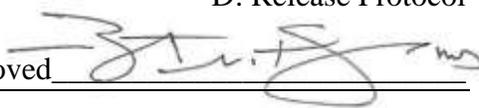
1.4. The investigator must verifies that the individual who signed the form is the legal NOK and check the Approved or Not Approved box on the form, appropriately.

1.5. The investigator returns the case chart with the approved Authorization to Release Form to the ID Unit.

2. Scheduling a Decedent Removal

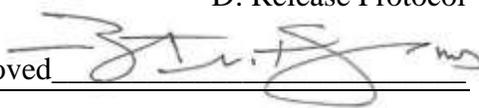
2.1. Each day during the morning meeting, the Mortuary staff reports to the ID Unit staff a start time for decedent release. (Start time is contingent upon the daily caseload.)

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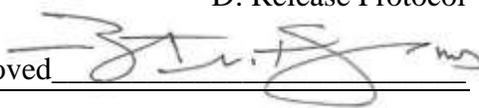
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- 2.1.1. ID Unit staff schedules one funeral home per hour from the start time until 6:00pm.
 - 2.2. The ID Unit staff receives a call from a funeral home requesting to schedule a decedent removal.
 - 2.3. The ID Unit staff verifies that the Authorization to Release a Body form is approved, signed and dated by an Investigator.
 - 2.3.1. If the form is missing, the ID Unit staff requests the funeral home to fax the completed form.
 - 2.3.2. If the form is unsigned, the ID Unit staff forwards the form to an Investigator.
 - 2.3.3. If the form is Not Approved, the ID Unit notifies the funeral home or forwards the funeral home to an Investigator for more information.
 - 2.3.4. If the decedent is on hold, the ID Unit staff forwards the caller to Investigations for additional information.
 - 2.4. After the form is verified for approval and signature, the ID Unit staff schedules the funeral home for a decedent removal and completes the OCME Release Log (P:\Communication forms\Communications\2013).
 - 2.4.1. The ID Unit staff provides the OCME case number to the funeral home while scheduling an appointment.
- 3. Completing Release Paperwork**
- 3.1. The ID Unit staff enters into the Body Release page of FACTS the following information:
 - 3.1.1. The name of the funeral home;
 - 3.1.2. The name of the individual making the removal;
 - 3.1.3. The title of the individual making the removal;
 - 3.1.4. The license number of the individual making the removal;
 - 3.2. The ID Unit staff prints from the Release Checklist page in FACTS the Receipt of Certification of Death form and signs and dates the form.
 - 3.3. The ID Unit staff prints two copies of the death certificate from EDRS.
 - 3.3.1. One copy (two pages) is stapled and placed in the Transcription basket.
 - 3.3.2. The first page of the second copy is placed in the chart.

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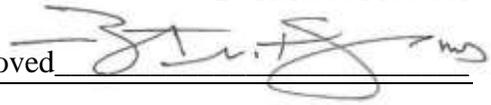
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- 3.3.3. The second page of the second copy, the Burial Transit Permit, is submitted with the signed Receipt of Certificate of Death and the approved and signed Authorization to Release a Body forms to the Mortuary staff.
- 3.4. The ID Unit creates a decedent release folder that includes:
- 3.4.1. signed and Approved Authorization to Release a Body form;
 - 3.4.2. Burial Transit Permit; and
 - 3.4.3. Receipt of Certification of Death.
 - 3.4.4. Death certificates approved for cremation may be included as well.
- 3.5. Peer Review
- 3.5.1. The completed release folder is forwarded to another ID Unit staff member for review.
 - 3.5.2. The peer reviewer verifies cross checks the case number, decedent name, age, gender and race across the Receipt of Certification of Death form, Authorization to Release a Body, and Burial Transit Permit.
 - 3.5.2.1. The peer reviewer initials the Receipt of Certification of Death form following a successful review; or returns the folder to the staff member for correction.
- 4. Finalizing the Chart**
- 4.1. At the end of the day, the ID Unit Staff retrieves the completed release paperwork from the Documentation room and places it in the appropriate case chart.
 - 4.2. The ID Unit staff completes the *Anthropology/ID Unit Final Case Review* checklist.
 - 4.2.1. If required documents are absent, the chart is placed in the file drawer marked “ME Case Files Pending Completion of Release Checklist” until the documents are received from the Mortuary staff.
 - 4.2.2. Mortuary staff place the chart in the file drawer marked “Cases Ready for Medical Records” after filing the final documents.
 - 4.2.3. The 11:30-8:00 ID Unit staff person reviews the files in the drawer marked “Cases Ready for Medical Records” daily and drops the cases with the completed checklist for medical records.
- 5. Release Procedure**
- 5.1. General

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- 5.1.1. Decedent to be released from OCME shall be secured and accompanied by OCME staff at all times during the removal process.
 - 5.1.2. A minimum of two OCME staff are required to be present and participate in the release process.
 - 5.1.3. Decedents leaving the OCME can only be released to licensed funeral homes/directors or designees.
- 5.2. Mortuary staff must confirm in FACTS that the body is ready to be released and that the 'Body Release' module has been properly completed by the ID Unit to include Funeral Home, Funeral Home representative, Funeral Home representative title, and Funeral Home license number.
- 5.3. Before a decedent can be released from OCME:
- 5.3.1. Funeral director or designee must verbally confirm the OCME case number, and Decedents Name, Age, Race and Gender to the OCME staff.
 - 5.3.2. Mortuary staff must receive a copy of the Authorization to Release a Body form from the funeral director, either in hard copy or electronic format.
 - 5.3.3. The following documents must be presented by the individual making the removal and must be photocopied by the OCME staff.
 - 5.3.3.1.1. Funeral Directors must present a Funeral Director's License;
 - 5.3.3.1.2. Apprentice Funeral Directors must present a Funeral Director's License AND Apprentice Director's License; and
 - 5.3.3.1.3. Funeral Director designees must present a Funeral Director's License or Courtesy Card
- 5.4. The Mortuary staff cross checks the Authorization to Release a Body form received from the funeral director to the approved Authorization to Release a Body form received from the ID Unit.
- 5.4.1. The funeral director or designee and Mortuary staff initial at the bottom of the approved Authorization to Release a Body form received from the ID Unit on the appropriate line.
- 5.5. Mortuary staff retrieves the body from the cooler and places it in the Documentation room.
- 5.5.1. The OCME case number and name of decedent removed from the cooler are removed from the Human Remains Inventory Box and Cart Sheet.

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- 5.6. The staff member opens the body bag to expose the decedent and clothing and/or personal property within the body bag for inspection by the funeral director.
 - 5.6.1. Each item of clothing and personal property is reviewed by the Mortuary Unit Staff and shown to the Funeral Director.

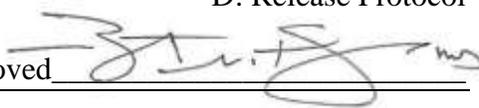
 - 5.7. Mortuary staff removes decedents toe tag and photocopies it.
 - 5.7.1. Mortuary staff verifies decedents name, age, sex, race, and OCME case number before removing the toe tag.
 - 5.7.1.1. If the name on the decedent's toe tag is incorrect or changed Mortuary staff will complete the following:
 - 5.7.1.1.1. Print a new label; and
 - 5.7.1.1.2. Create a new toe tag and arm band; and
 - 5.7.1.1.3. Copy the new and original toe tags; and
 - 5.7.1.1.4. Replace the incorrect toe tag and arm band with the corrected toe tag and arm band.

 - 5.8. The following forms and documentation are generated by Mortuary Unit staff, and signed and dated by the funeral home director (or designee) and the Mortuary staff. Mortuary staff verifies that the case number, name, age, sex, and race are consistent on all forms before signing.
 - 5.8.1. Receipt of Remains (generated from FACTS at the time of release);
 - 5.8.2. Property Released to Funeral Home (generated from FACTS at the time of release);
 - 5.8.2.1. The Property Released to the Funeral Home Form is cross checked by the Mortuary Unit staff with the items of clothing and personal property in the body bag.
 - 5.8.3. Photocopy of the toe tag (initials only);
 - 5.8.3.1. If the name on the decedent's toe tag is incorrect or changed, a photocopy of the initialed new and original toe tag are generated by Mortuary Unit staff.
 - 5.8.3.2. Photocopies of the decedents initialed toe tag must have legible OCME Case Number and Decedents name, age, race, and sex.
 - 5.8.4. Receipt of Certification of Death (signed by ID Unit, not Mortuary staff).

 - 5.9. Mortuary staff and the funeral home staff signs the Release logbook.

 - 5.10. The following forms are provided to the funeral director:
 - 5.10.1. Burial Transit Permit;
 - 5.10.2. Certificate of Death, when stamped Cremation Approval

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5.10.3. A copy of the Receipt of Remains, as requested by funeral director

5.11. Mortuary staff assists the funeral home personnel with transferring the decedent to the removal equipment.

6. Post-Release Procedure

6.1. The following forms are placed in the ID Unit basket for retrieval by the ID Unit staff:

- 6.1.1. Receipt of Certificate of Death;
- 6.1.2. Copy of the funeral director's license.

6.2. The following forms are retained by the Mortuary staff for quality assurance review:

- 6.2.1. Receipt of Remains;
- 6.2.2. Property Released to Funeral Home; and
- 6.2.3. Photocopy of the toe tags.

6.3. Body trays and carts are disinfected.

7. Peer Review

7.1. The following completed forms and documentation are peer reviewed by another Mortuary Unit staff after release.

- 7.1.1. Receipt of Remains Form
- 7.1.2. Property Released to Funeral Home Form
- 7.1.3. Photocopy of Decedents Toe Tag
- 7.1.4. Release Log Book
- 7.1.5. FACTS Body Release Module
- 7.1.6. FACTS Property Release Module

7.2. The peer reviewer verifies and cross checks the OCME case number, decedents name, age, race, and gender on all release forms and the Release log book.

7.3. The peer reviewer verifies and cross checks that the forms and Release log book are completed with date/time, and signatures of the Mortuary Unit Staff, and Funeral Director.

7.4. The peer reviewer completes and signs the Release checklist following a successful review; or notifies mortuary staff for correction.

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7.5. The peer reviewed forms are returned to ID Unit Basket for retrieval in the Documentation Room or placed directly in the case file within the ID Unit.

8. Release of Tissue and Specimens

8.1. Supplemental Receipt of Remains form is generated from FACTS and signed and dated by the Mortuary staff and funeral director.

8.1.1. The 'Supplemental Receipt of Remains' form is accessible from the Documents menu in FACTS.

8.1.2. The check box field on the Body Release module in FACTS shall also be completed for 'Supplemental Release'.

9. Public Disposition

9.1. Decedents released for public disposition and anatomical donation will be marked in refrigerated storage with colored toe tags.

9.2. The colored toe tags and original toe tag will be initially verified by forensic anthropologist and mortuary unit supervisor or designee for verification of the decedent toe tag and personal property before the scheduled release date.

9.3. At the time of the release the mortuary staff will mark the Public Disposition box in the Body Release module in FACTS.