TITLE: IDENTIFICATION METHODS AND CONFIRMATION

Policy: The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) is responsible for the positive identification of all decedents whose deaths are investigated pursuant to DC Code § 5-1403 and 1409.

Purpose: To ensure efficient and timely identification of decedents under the jurisdiction of OCME.

Scope: The following procedure is to assist the ID Unit and any OCME staff member involved in the identifications of a decedent.

1. Identification
   1.1. Prior to positive identification, each case is listed in Forensic Automated Case Tracking System (FACTS) as Unidentified or with a tentative name.
      1.1.1. A tentative name is listed in parentheses: (first name), (last name).
      1.1.2. Unidentified decedents are listed with the first name Unidentified and last name Unidentified. Additional information such as demographics may be listed as the middle name. Failure to list the first and last name as Unidentified restricts search capabilities within FACTS.

   1.2. Visual identification is the preferred method of identification when the decedent is viewable and a close family member or friend is available. When a visual identification is not possible, the decedent is identified by alternate methods.

   1.3. Acceptable alternate methods of identification, listed in order of priority, are:
      1.3.1. Fingerprints
      1.3.2. Radiograph comparison, dental or skeletal
         1.3.2.1. Odontology examination is performed or consultation sought in all OCME cases of skeletal remains and when necessary for identification.
         1.3.2.2. Anthropological examination/evaluation is performed or consultation sought in all OCME cases of skeletal remains.
      1.3.3. DNA comparison
1.4. When the above methods of positive identification are unsuccessful, circumstantial identification is pursued.

2. Identification Confirmation

2.1 Prior to release of a decedent, the case pathologist reviews the identification process.

2.2 The pathologist initials and dates the paperwork generated during the identification process indicating he/she has reviewed and agrees with the identification

   2.2.1 Visual Identification – Decedent Identification form
   2.2.2 Finger Prints – Finger print comparison report
   2.2.3 Radiograph Comparison – Supplemental report or Anthropology report
   2.2.4 DNA – Laboratory report
   2.2.5 Circumstantial ID – Supplemental report

2.3 Pathologists typically review the identification forms at the time of e-signing the death certificate.