

- Policy:** The District of Columbia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) shall investigate child deaths in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Sudden Unexplained Infant Death Investigation guidelines (SUIDI).
- Purpose:** To provide guidance on conducting a child death investigation to include response to the scene, caregiver interviews, doll reenactment, and obtaining pertinent histories.
- Scope:** The following procedures apply to the Investigations Unit. Medicolegal Investigators are primarily responsible for the investigation of child deaths.
- Definitions:** Infant – a child less than one year of age
Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) – a sudden and unexpected death of an infant in which the cause of death is not obvious before investigation.

1. Sudden Unexplained Infant Death Investigations

- 1.1. Infant deaths without an immediately obvious cause of death are investigated following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Sudden Unexplained Infant Death Investigation guidelines. A SUIDI may be conducted on a child with developmental disabilities up to two (2) years of age.
 - 1.1.1. Investigators should consult with the on-call Medical Examiner as needed to determine jurisdiction in cases of children with development disabilities.
- 1.2. The Medicolegal Investigator (MLI) shall conduct the following;
 - 1.2.1. Contact the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction to coordinate response to the hospital and the incident scene;
 - 1.2.2. Respond to the hospital first and complete the following;
 - 1.2.2.1. Examine and photograph the decedent;
 - 1.2.2.1.1. Lividity patterns and impressions on the body are especially important to photograph as they are subject to change.
 - 1.2.2.1.2. Obtain a rectal temperature if not obtained by the hospital.
 - 1.2.2.2. Collect medical records;
 - 1.2.2.3. Collect clothing and the diaper (to be sent with the body to the OCME);
 - 1.2.2.4. Interview the individual who placed the infant to sleep ("placer") and the individual who found the infant unresponsive ("finder") separately;
 - 1.2.2.5. Document information on the SUIDI Reporting Form (SUIDIRF); and,
 - 1.2.2.6. Explain the SUIDI process to the family emphasizing the importance of the doll reenactment in determination of the cause and manner of death.

- 1.2.2.7. Note: If the death occurred at Children's National Emergency Department at United Medical Center and jurisdiction has been accepted, arrange for transport immediately as there is no morgue access.
- 1.2.3. Respond to the incident scene complete the following;
 - 1.2.3.1. Document the location of the scene, e.g., home, daycare, or vehicle.
 - 1.2.3.2. If the scene is a residence, document the general appearance and state of repair of the exterior and interior;
 - 1.2.3.3. Document the presence of cigarettes, alcohol, illicit drugs, and drug paraphernalia;
 - 1.2.3.4. Document the presence of prescriptions and over-the-counter medications;
 - 1.2.3.5. Document the presence/absence of infant formula, bottles, baby food, and care items such as diapers, wipes, ointments;
 - 1.2.3.6. Photograph and measure the sleep environment(s) (when applicable)
 - 1.2.3.6.1. Bassinet, crib, or portable play pen;
 - 1.2.3.6.2. Adult bed;
 - 1.2.3.6.2.1. Size and arrangement;
 - 1.2.3.6.2.2. Layers of bedding;
 - 1.2.3.6.2.3. Items on the bed;
 - 1.2.3.6.2.4. Areas of discoloration on bedding;
 - 1.2.3.6.3. Measure stains in relationship to the head and edge of the bed; and
 - 1.2.3.7. Conduct a doll reenactment;
 - 1.2.3.7.1. Ask the "placer" to place the doll in the position the infant was last placed (last known alive). Ensure the "placed" placard is in each photograph.
 - 1.2.3.7.2. Obtain detailed photos of the position of the head, neck, nose and mouth.
 - 1.2.3.7.3. When co-sleeping has occurred, ask the appropriate individual to take their original position on the sleep surface with the doll.
 - 1.2.3.7.4. Have the finder place the infant in the found position. Place the "found" placard next to the child and photograph the sleeping area.
 - 1.2.3.7.5. Use the "Placed" and "Found" photo placards.
- 1.3. Contact Child Protective Services and document any involvement with the family.
- 1.4. Submit the completed SUIDIRF in the E-case file.
- 1.5. Request the following reports/records;
 - 1.5.1. EMS runsheet;
 - 1.5.2. Police Report;

- 1.5.3. Emergency Department (terminal encounter);
 - 1.5.4. Labor and delivery; and,
 - 1.5.5. Pediatrician visits / immunizations.
- 1.6. When an MLI is not available, the Forensic Investigator (FI) on duty shall;
- 1.6.1. Contact the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction to coordinate response to the hospital;
 - 1.6.2. Examine and photograph the decedent;
 - 1.6.3. Collect medical records;
 - 1.6.4. Collect clothing and diaper (to be sent with the body to the OCME);
 - 1.6.5. Explain to the family that another investigator will contact them to ask questions and arrange for a doll reenactment; and
 - 1.6.6. Return to the office and endorse the case to the next available MLI.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date	Version	Description of Activity or Revision	Approved By