Policy: The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) is responsible for issuing death certificates for all deaths investigated pursuant to DC Code § 5-1403 and 1409.

Purpose: To ensure efficient and timely filing of death certificates with Washington DC Department of Health Vital Records Division (VRD).

Scope: The following procedure is to assist the ID Unit and any OCME staff member tasked with completing death certificates.

Definitions:
- COD – Cause of death
- CMS – Case management system
- EDRS-VITA – Electronic Death Registration System
- ID Unit – Identification Unit
- PON – physician assigned daily to handle charts

1. ID UNIT RESPONSIBILITY
   1.1. Initiating a Death Certificate
      1.1.1. ID Unit staff initiates a death certificate within the Electronic Death Register System (EDRS) – VITA after the decedent is positively identified and the Cause of Death Determination (COD) form is received from the medical examiner.
      1.1.2. Step by step instructions for creating a death certificate are provided in the EDRS Training Manual.
      1.1.3. A copy of the death certificate is printed and placed in the case chart.
      1.1.4. The ID Unit staff updates the Release Checklist within CMS to document who typed the death certificate.
   1.2. Peer review
      1.2.1. After the death certificate is created, the case file is passed to another ID Unit staff member for peer review.
      1.2.2. The peer reviewer cross references the hard copy of the death certificate, COD form, CMS entry and EDRS-VITA entry for accuracy.
      1.2.2.1. When necessary, the originator makes corrections to the death certificate.
      1.2.3. Once the death certificate is error free, the peer reviewer initial and dates the hard copy of the death certificate and returns it to the chart.
   1.3. Certification of the Death Certificate
1.3.1. Within EDRS-VITA, the ID Unit staff request certification and selects the medical examiner that performed the examination from the dropdown list.

1.3.2. When the medical examiner is out of the office, the ID Unit staff selects the physician assigned to charts (PON).

1.4. Releasing a Death Certificate

1.4.1. When a decedent is scheduled to be released, ID Unit staff prints three copies of the certified death certificate.

1.4.1.1. A complete copy and the first page of a second copy are placed in the case chart.

1.4.1.2. The transit permit (second page) is placed in the release chart.

1.4.1.3. A complete copy is filed in the Death Certificate binder.

1.4.2. After the decedent is released, the death certificate is assigned to the appropriate funeral home within EDRS-VITA and transferred.

2. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S RESPONSIBILITY

2.1. Upon completion of a medicolegal case examination, the medical examiner assigned to the case generated a COD form from CMS and submits it to the ID Unit.

2.2. Certifying a Death Certificate

2.2.1. Each medical examiner logs into EDRS-VITA daily and checks his/her queue for death certificates requiring certification and completes the following:

2.2.1.1. Verifies the information is accurate;

2.2.1.1.1. If information is incorrect, the medical examiner asks the ID Unit to correct the error.

2.2.1.2. Clicks the certify button within EDRS-VITA and enters his/her pin number.

2.2.2. The PON checks his/her queue regularly throughout business hours and certifies all death certificates in the queue.

3. CHANGES TO A DEATH CERTIFICATE

3.1. Prior to release of a decedent and death certificate to a funeral home, the death certificate may be changed.

3.1.1. The examining medical examiner submits the Amended COD form to the ID Unit. The ID Unit transfers the death certificate to the medical examiner within EDRS-VITA for un-esignature.

3.1.2. The medical examiner un-esigns the death certificate and revises it or asks the ID Unit staff to revise it.
3.1.3. The medical examiner re-signs the death certificate.