

Guidance for Reporting COVID-19 on Certificate of Death

From: Ohio Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics (ODH/VS)

To: Ohio Physicians, Ohio Funeral Homes and Ohio Local Registrars

Coronavirus Disease 2019 or **COVID-19** should be reported on the death certificate for all decedents where the disease caused or is assumed to have caused or contributed to death. Specification of the causal pathway leading to death in Part I of the certificate is also important. For example, in cases when COVID-19 causes pneumonia and fatal respiratory distress, both pneumonia and respiratory distress should be included along with COVID-19 in Part I. Certifiers should include as much detail as possible based on their knowledge of the case, medical records, laboratory testing, etc. If the decedent had other chronic conditions such as COPD or asthma that may have also contributed, these conditions can be reported in Part II. Following is an example:

CAUSE OF DEATH	28. Part I. Enter the disease, injuries, or complications that caused the death. Do not enter the mode of dying, such as cardiac or respiratory arrest, shock, or heart failure. List only one cause on each line. Type or print in permanent blue or black ink.	Approximate Interval: Onset and Death
	Immediate Cause (Final disease or condition resulting in death)	a. ACUTE RESPIRATORY DISTRESS SYNDROME 2 DAYS
	Sequentially list conditions, if any, leading to immediate cause.	b. Due to (or as Consequence of) PNEUMONIA 10 DAYS
	Enter Underlying Cause (Disease or injury that initiated events resulting in a death)	c. Due to (or as Consequence of) COVID-19 10 DAYS
Part II. Other significant conditions contributing to death but not resulting in the underlying cause given in Part I. ASTHMA		29a. Was An Autopsy Performed? NO
		29b. Were Autopsy Findings Available Prior To Completion Of Cause of Death? NOT APPLICABLE

Should "COVID-19" be Reported on the Death Certificate Only With a Confirmed Test?

COVID-19 should be reported on the death certificate for all decedents where the disease caused **or is assumed to have caused or contributed to death**. Certifiers should include as much detail as possible based on their knowledge of the case, medical records, laboratory testing, etc.

What Happens if the Terms Reported on the Death Certificate Indicate Uncertainty?

When "probable COVID-19" is indicated on the death certificate, ODH/VS will consider these to be COVID-19 cases with regard to death reporting. When "pending COVID-19 testing" is reported on the death certificate this would be considered a pending record and ODH/VS will respectfully follow up to verify if test results confirmed the decedent had COVID-19.

Special Note About Pandemic Checkboxes Available to Physicians who Certify Electronically

ODH/VS built the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) with pandemic checkboxes that are visible in the cause of death tab. COVID-19 was recently added as a choice in the 'Mass Fatality/Pandemic Description' field and should be selected when the death is caused by COVID-19. It is very important to also document COVID-19 in the 'Immediate Cause' section or in the 'Due to or as a Consequence of' fields. When a death certificate has "COVID-19" indicated in the 'Pandemic Description' field but does not also contain that term in the text literals in Box 28, ODH/VS will follow up with the certifier to obtain a supplemental.

Cause of Death (cont)		
32. Manner of Death Natural	Pending Investigation N	Mass Fatality/Pandemic Description COVID-19
28. Cause of Death (Part 1) Enter the chain of events that directly caused death.		
a. Immediate Cause (Final disease or condition resulting in Death)	Units	Cause was due to Pandemic (Y,N,U)?
ACUTE RESPIRATORY DISTRESS SYNDROME	2 DAYS	Y
28. List Conditions leading to the cause on line A.		
b. Due to or as a Consequence of	Units	Cause was due to Pandemic (Y,N,U)?
PNEUMONIA	10 DAYS	Y
c. Due to or as a Consequence of	Units	Cause was due to Pandemic (Y,N,U)?
COVID-19	10 DAYS	Y