



**DISTRICT TWENTY MEDICAL EXAMINER
COLLIER COUNTY**

3838 Domestic Avenue · Naples, Florida 34104
Phone: (239) 434-5020 · Fax: (239) 434-5027
www.colliergov.net/naplesme · e-mail: naplesme@d20me.net

Effective Friday, August 14, 2020, pursuant to notification by the Florida Medical Examiners Commission, Medical Examiners will no longer assume jurisdiction of deaths due to COVID-19, unless the death meets other jurisdiction criteria, such as death due to trauma, violence, acute intoxications, accidental deaths, etc.

Deaths attributed to COVID-19 will be certified by their treating physician, as are other natural deaths. **Hospitals, clinics, and other medical facilities are no longer required to report COVID-19 deaths to the Medical Examiner if the death meets no other ME jurisdictional criteria.** We ask that these deaths **NOT** be reported in order to relieve the increased workload experienced by the Medical Examiner's Office as a result of the pandemic.

Attached is the motion passed by the Medical Examiners Commission on Friday, August 14, 2020.

Thank you for your kind cooperation. If you have any questions regarding this or any other matter, please call during business hours, Monday through Friday 9 AM – 4 PM.

Sincerely,

Marta U. Coburn, M.D.
District Medical Examiner
Collier County, Florida
Phone: 239-434-5020

MOTION

Commissioner Barbara Wolf, M.D., made a motion that Florida medical examiners need not accept jurisdiction of COVID-19 related deaths unless the provisions of Rule 11G-2.001(3), F.A.C., apply. Rule 11G-2.001(3), F.A.C., provides the following:

If a medical examiner becomes aware of a death, apparently from disease, he or she shall investigate it as a death from a disease constituting a threat to the public health, if:

The investigation is requested by an official of the Department of Health pursuant to Section 381.0011 or 381.0012, F.S., or

The medical examiner determines that additional information concerning the cause and mechanism of death, beyond that available in the decedent's medical history, is needed to protect the public health.

Commissioner Carol Whitmore, seconded the motion, and the motion passed 7-1, with Commissioner Ken Jones opposing only because he would have preferred the motion to be vetted with outside entities prior to the vote.

In support of the motion, the Commission cited the knowledge gained of the disease during the past five months, delay in obtaining medical records, and the overwhelming number of cases that have resulted in insurmountable and growing backlogs for many districts throughout the State (i.e. 650 cases in Miami-Dade County, 510 cases in Palm Beach County, 100 cases in Broward County, and 100 cases in the 6 counties in the panhandle around Bay County). The Florida Emergency Mortuary Operations Response System (FEMORS) was activated and there were not enough forensic pathologists and medicolegal investigators to support the statewide caseload. FEMORS was created to support short-term events such as natural disasters or other short-term emergency events. The volume of COVID-19 cases pending with medical examiner offices has created significant delays in the issuance of death certificates and cremation authorizations. It has proven to be unsustainable for the State's medical examiner system, and is diverting resources from unnatural deaths that the medical examiners must investigate and certify.

Medical examiners will not automatically assume jurisdiction of COVID-19 cases and treating physicians may certify COVID-19 deaths. It was noted that any cases accepted by medical examiners that are pending would still be certified by the medical examiner.