



Clinical Staff Executive Committee

MEDICAL CENTER POLICY NO. 0014

A. SUBJECT: Death Certificates, Fetal Death Reports and Consultation/Disposition Forms

B. EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2011 (R)

C. POLICY:

Death certificates and fetal death reports issued at the University of Virginia Medical Center must have the medical section completed and signed by a physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant within twenty-four hours after pronouncement of death or after delivery or termination of pregnancy, consistent with the Code of Virginia §32.1-263. [A Consultation/Disposition form](#) must accompany all fetal death reports.

D. PROCEDURE:

Death Packets (containing the death certificate and other required forms), fetal death reports and consultation/disposition forms are available on the patient care units and are supplied by the Decedent Affairs Coordinator who can provide detailed instructions and assistance. Additional information is available at the Decedent Affairs intranet site:

<https://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/intranet/decedent-affairs/>

When the physician/nurse practitioner/physician assistant and patient care area staff complete the appropriate sections, the forms must be returned to the Decedent Affairs Coordinator (PIC# 1405).

1. *Death Certificates* (used for infant, pediatric or adult deaths): There are two types of death certificates:

a. **Green line** - death certificate indicating a routine hospital death. This certificate is included in the orange-covered death packet and will be completed by the Medical Center physician (i.e., the attending or resident) attending to the patient at the time of death.

In the absence of such Medical Center attending physician or resident, or with his/her approval, the certificate may be completed by another physician, a nurse practitioner or a physician assistant who work within the Medical Center.

If the death is a natural death and the physician/nurse practitioner/physician assistant is uncertain about the cause of death, he/she shall use best medical judgment to certify a reasonable cause of death.

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As provided in Virginia Code § 32.1-263, a physician/nurse practitioner/physician assistant who signs a certificate of death or determines the cause of death, shall be immune from civil liability for such signature and determination of causes of death on such certificate absent gross negligence or willful misconduct.

- b. **Red line** - death certificate indicating unnatural causes of death; e.g. trauma, violence, burns, unexplained death and Sudden Infant Death (SIDS). This certificate will be completed by the Medical Examiner after his/her examination/investigation is completed. In this situation, a Medical Center physician/nurse practitioner/physician assistant does not need to complete a death certificate.

2. *Fetal Death Reports* (used for spontaneous fetal death or induced termination of pregnancy): There are two types of fetal death reports:

- a. **Yellow line** - report of spontaneous fetal death.
- b. **Brown line** - report of induced termination of pregnancy.

Fetal death reports are required for any fetal material, regardless of gestation period. A Consultation/Disposition following Fetal/Early Neonatal Death on the OB Service form (see below) must accompany all fetal death reports.

3. *Consultation/Disposition Following Fetal/Early Neonatal Death On The OB Service; Consultation/Disposition Form:*

Consultation:

All requests for further study following fetal deaths/early neonatal deaths are based on the medical judgment of the responsible physician. The physician providing care to the mother and indicated on the Consultation/Disposition form must obtain consent from the mother or the legally authorized representative. Any additional forms that are required are indicated below.

- a. **Surgical Pathology** - The physician should complete a Surgical Pathology Request form.
- b. **Physical Examination by Consultant** - The physician should complete a Consultation Request form.
- c. **Autopsy** - The physician should complete the Consent for Autopsy form that must be signed by the mother (or legally authorized representative) and two witnesses.
- d. For anything other than external physical examination of the fetus, e.g. withdrawal of blood or excision of tissue, the clinician who will obtain the specimen must obtain a separate signed consent form from the mother (or legally authorized representative) and put it into the medical record.


There is a section on the Consultation/Disposition form to indicate that the mother (or legally authorized representative) does not wish to receive any consultation or services.


Disposition:

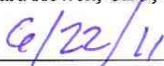
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Completion of the Disposition section of the Consultation/Disposition form is required for all fetal deaths. The mother (or legally authorized representative) must either authorize the Medical Center to dispose of the remains or designate a funeral home or other party to pick up the remains.

SIGNATURE:


Robert S. Gibson, M.D., President, Clinical Staff


R. Edward Howell, CEO, UVA Medical Center



DATE:

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Approved July 1983

Revised August 1987, August 1990, September 1993, March 1996, March 1999, November 2002, August 2003, March 2005, March 2008, June 2011

Approved by Patient Care Committee

Approved by Clinical Staff Executive Committee