Leo Lew
Assistant County Manager
Administrative Services

PINAL • COUNTY
wide open opportunity

Greg Stanley
County Manager

April 21, 2014

Mortuary Owners, Employees, and Representatives—

Pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes §11-593, the following cases must be referred to the Pinal County Medical Examiner's Office (PCMEO):

1. Death when not under the current care of a health care provider as defined pursuant to section 36-301
2. Death resulting from violence.
3. Death occurring suddenly when in apparent good health.
4. Death occurring in a prison.
5. Death of a prisoner.
6. Death occurring in a suspicious, unusual or unnatural manner.
7. Death from disease or an accident believed to be related to the deceased's occupation or employment.
8. Death believed to present a public health hazard.
9. Death occurring during, in association with or as a result of anesthetic or surgical procedures.
10. Death involving unidentifiable bodies.

Arizona Revised Statutes §36-301.8 defines a "current care" as follows:

> A health care provider has examined, treated or provided care for a person for a chronic or acute condition within eighteen months preceding that person's death. Current care does not include services provided in connection with a single event of emergency or urgent care. For the purposes of this paragraph, "treated" includes prescribing medication.

Arizona Revised Statutes §36-301.19 defines a "health care provider" as follows:

> (a) A physician licensed pursuant to title 32, chapter 13 or 17.
> (b) A doctor of naturopathic medicine licensed pursuant to title 32, chapter 14.
> (c) A midwife licensed pursuant to chapter 6, article 7 of this title.
> (d) A nurse midwife certified pursuant to title 32, chapter 15.
> (e) A nurse practitioner licensed and certified pursuant to title 32, chapter 15.
> (f) A physician assistant licensed pursuant to title 32, chapter 25.
> (g) A health care provider who is licensed or certified by another state or jurisdiction of the United States and who works in a federal health care facility.

According to Arizona Revised Statutes §36-325.G, if a person under the current care of a health care provider for an acute or chronic medical condition dies of that condition, or complications associated with that condition, the health care provider or a health care provider designated by that provider shall complete and sign the medical certification of death on a death certificate within 72 hours. If current care

has not been provided, the medical examiner shall complete and sign the medical certification of death on a death certificate within seventy-two hours after the examination, excluding weekends and holidays.

According to Arizona Revised Statutes §36-325.H, if a person dies in a hospital, nursing care institution or hospice inpatient facility of natural causes, the hospital, nursing care institution or facility shall designate a health care provider to complete and sign the medical certification of death within seventy-two hours.

If a health care provider who provided "current care" refuses to sign the death certificate and the PCMEO investigation reveals the death is not otherwise an "ME case," the responsibility for certifying the death will fall back to the health care provider. **A health care provider's refusal to certify a natural death after having provided "current care" does not automatically result in a death becoming an "ME case."** The PCMEO cannot legally certify a death in which "current care" was provided and no other circumstances exist mandating invocation of PCMEO jurisdiction.

Thank you for your continued patience while we streamline our processes with an emphasis on statutorily compliant and professional, efficient, and customer-service oriented medicolegal death investigation services. If you have any questions or concerns about this or any PCMEO-related issue, do not hesitate to contact me at 520-866-7270 or Paul.Parker@pinalcountyaz.gov.

Sincerely,

Paul R. Parker, B.S., D-ABMDI
Chief Investigator
Pinal County Medical Examiner's Office
570 W. Adamsville Road
Florence, AZ 85132
Desk: 520-866-7270
Paul.Parker@pinalcountyaz.gov