



NYS EDRS Newsletter

New CEU Course Wrestles with Issues in Cause of Death and Opioid Determinations

Mastering the Cause of Death in the 21st Century launches Fall 2019

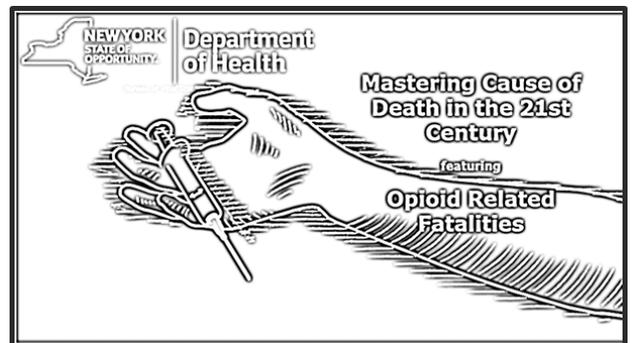
Each year, thousands of death certificates are medically certified with ill-defined, literal terms such as “cardiopulmonary arrest.” When aggregated, information from these death certificates fails to assist in countering rapidly changing public health crises, such as maternal mortality and deaths related to opioid abuse. Identifying the precise cause of death creates opportunities for the discovery of lifesaving treatments and protocols such as maternal education programs and naloxone access programs. For this reason, the New York State Department of Health developed a course that addresses medical certification with specific attention focused on deaths related to opioids.

The course, *Mastering the Cause-of-Death in the 21st Century*, presents complex circumstances surrounding an opioid related death posing a unique set of circumstances for medical certification. Its curriculum is designed to assist medical examiners, coroners, and medical certifiers with classifying potential substance-related deaths. The course was developed under a grant from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to respond to the ripple effect of the opioid crisis.

In addition to didactic course material, the course case challenges the learner with scenarios developed and presented by Dr Katherine Maloney, Erie County Assistant Medical Examiner. Participants complete activities that identify the cause of death for natural deaths and to differentiate and correctly identify the cause of death when an opioid substance is involved.

This free course launches in September for all medical examiners, coroners and medical certifiers who complete the cause of death section of the death certificate.

For more information about the course, potential CEU credit, or for registration instructions, contact Zina Adams at zina.adams@health.ny.gov or 518-474-4317.



Key Dates

Completed Winter—Spring 2018

- EDRS Amendments Pilot started
- EDRS version updated April, 2019
- EDRS Phase 2 Completed



Ongoing—Summer 2019

- EDRS Amendment Pilot continues
- Fetal Death Pilot continues
- Onboarding for remaining hospital units, such as ERs and specialists, and medical practices including sole proprietor offices continues
- Live webinar training for EDRS onboarding; see EDRS website for training schedule: http://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/edrs

Funeral Firms - Call to Action

Editing Place of Death after Certification for Accuracy

Remember, personal case owners (Funeral Firms) have the **ability to edit the Place of Death address after a case has been medically certified**, for deaths occurring outside of medical facilities, as long as the case has not been registered. Accurate Place of Death addresses are important for the case to be electronically assigned to the correct local registration filing office.

If you find a discrepancy in the address, with a private residence death for instance, you can edit the address to accurately reflect the physical location where the death occurred in the jurisdiction where the owner of that location pays taxes. This is not necessarily the mailing address.

Take the below example:

- The death occurred on Charlton Road, Ballston Spa NY 12020. The location of the private residence is physically in the Town of Ballston.
- The reported **Place of Death** address should be *Ballston Town* in EDRS. This way the Town of Ballston Local Registrar can view and access the case to affirm and register the death with the state.
- If Ballston Spa Village were selected at the City or Town due to the mailing address, the case will go to the Ballston Spa Local Registrar in error. This will delay registration and burial permit generation.

NOTE: The Resident Address should also reflect this physical location and not the mailing address. EDRS provides a text field to key the mailing address, which will then print on the Death Certificate if families are concerned.

Fast Facts

46,000 EDRS users

100% Counties using EDRS for filing electronic deaths

760+ Fetal Death Certificates filed electronically as of August through the Pilot Program.

Funeral Directors — Social Security Numbers and SSA Verification

Key Social Security Numbers

As you know, it is very important to correctly report the social security number of a decedent. It is highly recommended that social security numbers are typed and not copied/pasted from other electronic sources. EDRS has a designated format, appearing to only allow the nine-digit number without keying the dashes.

Social Security Number

Copying and right-clicking to paste the number actually can bring in errors to the number including dashes, special symbols, or extra spaces, that might not be visible in EDRS. If the number is not entered on the Decedent page correctly the SSN verification can become locked in a pending status or cause a system error, blocking the record from being signed and subsequently registered. If this occurs it will corrupt the EDRS record and force you to create a new case.

To avoid having to start a new case, always key in the SSN and visually confirm against the source before clicking the Verifying SSN link.

SSN Verification and Benefits Distribution

Some Funeral Directors have reported significant lags between a registered death and when the Social Security Administration (SSA) stops sending out benefit checks to the decedent. Although, not due to EDRS functionality or processing, NYS Bureau of Vital Records reported this concern to the SSA. SSA performs manual verification of the SSN, therefore currently has a backlog of records.

Electronic Systems Don't Replace Human Interaction

In this era of smart technology, please remember that EDRS does not replace human interaction. The regulated 72 hour deadline for reporting deaths in New York State is for the whole process, from pronouncement of death to registration.

The ability to electronically send a record through the workflow does not always negate the need for a telephone call or email. In fact, direct verbal communication can clear up confusion and expedite the death certification process to successful and timely registration.

Please keep the lines of communication open and timely.

ME Review versus Review Non-Affiliated Medical Certification

With the introduction of the *Request Non-Affiliated Medical Certification* functionality, case owners are able to **share** cases with Medical Examiners and other medical certifiers for purposes of obtaining certification. These non-affiliated medical professionals are more knowledgeable to the decedent’s medical history or are engaged because of requirements in Public Health Law, such as unattended deaths or assisting non-medically licensed Coroners. Completing this non-affiliated request requires the recipient of the request to accept or decline the case through *Review Non-Affiliated Medical Certification*.

Medical Examiners can also receive requests through a referral. In this situation, the case owner is **transferring** the case, through the *Refer to Medical Examiner* function, to the ME. Completing this referral requires the ME to accept or decline the case through *ME Review*.

Receiving requests these two ways can cause confusion. **It is very important for the Medical Examiner to accept or decline the case through the same functionality from which the request was sent.** Origin of the request or referral can be determined by the message text or work queue to access the case, or even reviewing the case’s status bar before taking any action. In order to keep the expected workflow, the acceptance or decline must be completed through the same process.

Watch for the following clues to accept a case through the request type:

Refer to Medical Examiner
— ownership **transferred** to the ME

ME Review Message Text, Queues, and Status

Message Text
Coroner/Medical Examiner: Please Take Ownership of Case ID 12372 -

Queue Name
ME Review Required
Non Affiliated Medical Certification Requested
Referred to ME

/ME Review Required/

(ME Review, continued next column)

Request Non-affiliated Medical Certification
— ownership **shared** between the requester and ME

Review Non-Affiliated Medical Certification Message Text, Queues, and Status

Message Text
Non-Affiliated Medical Certifier: Please review and complete medical certification for: Office Assigned to:

Queue Name
ME Review Required
Non Affiliated Medical Certification Requested
Referred to ME

/Non Affiliated Medical Certification Requested

Medical Examiners — Call to Action

- Watch the message text for the type of request being sent to you.
- Keep track of which queue you used to access a case to take the correct action.
- If you access a case via a message or notification, check the status bar of the case to see which request type is required.
- If you are questioning the request or do not see the expected action options, do not try to assume ownership of the case through another method. This will interrupt the case workflow and could trigger rework.

Contact EDRS by email at edrs@health.ny.gov, or by phone at the EDRS Call Center 844-866-EDRS (3377) for assistance before taking any action.

All EDRS Users—Call Before You Click!

If you don’t know what a feature or link does in EDRS, don’t click it, especially those under the *Other Links* section of the *Death or Fetal Death Registration Menu*. Some links change the entire workflow and ownership of a case, requiring rework on your part.

If you are uncertain or not getting the expected results in EDRS, call before you click. EDRS Call Center: 844-866-EDRS (3377).

Rollout and Phase Statuses

EDRS Implementation Complete

At this time, the Department of Health would like to formally announce the completion of the statewide, EDRS roll-out. Full compliance in the **use of EDRS is mandatory for all hospitals (All Departments including Emergency Room and Special Units where deaths may occur), nursing homes, certified hospice providers, primary care physicians, medical examiners, coroners, funeral directors, and local registration officials in New York State, excluding New York City.** Only under extenuating circumstances, such as internet/system outages will the State accept the use of paper death certificates.

The EDRS team will continue to offer recurring trainings and any onboarding assistance for medical certifiers, funeral directors, and registration officials. Please visit the EDRS website, https://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/edrs/ for training dates and self-paced video tutorials.

Support and cooperation from all our stakeholders is essential for successful transition to operational mode of this worthwhile initiative. The Department of Health and Bureau of Vital Records thanks you for your continued cooperation. Questions regarding this directive should be routed to the Bureau of Vital Records at 518-408-0310.

Spontaneous Fetal Death Pilot

Pilot of the Fetal Death module in EDRS continues with the four medical facilities electronically submitting over 760 fetal death records to date along with funeral firms when a disposition is required.

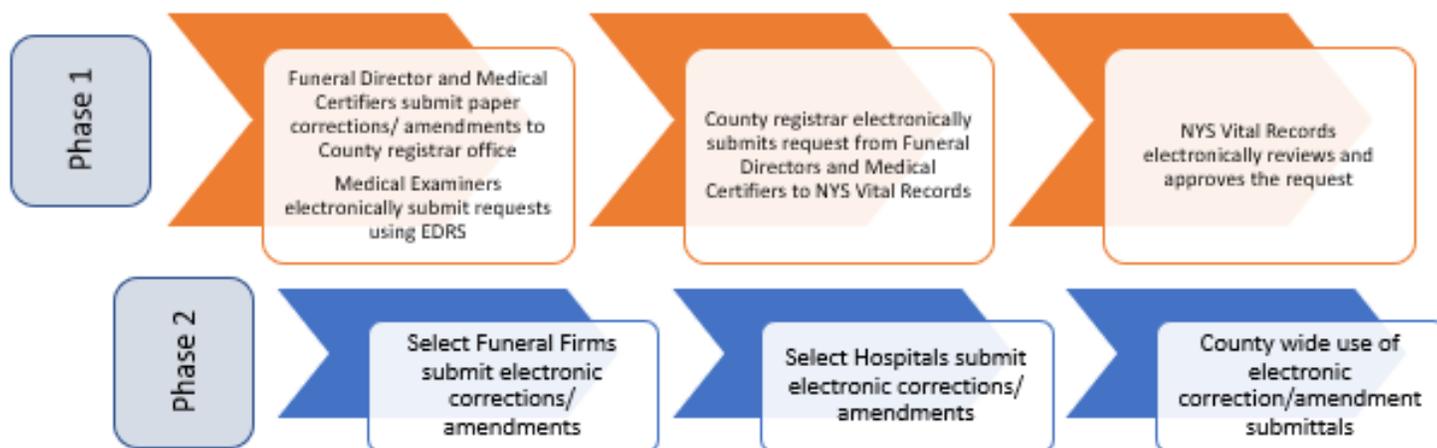
Further information about the roll-out will be announced on the [EDRS website](#) and in future editions of this EDRS Newsletter.

Contact Jen Payeur, NYS Fetal Death program lead. Email: efdr@health.ny.gov / Phone: 844-866-3377.

Amendments and Corrections Pilot

The EDRS project team began pilot activities with the **County Registrar and Medical Examiners in Monroe County** for the amendment and correction implementation on June 4, 2019. The pilot includes amendments to electronic records only. Extension of pilot activities including participation of select Funeral Directors, other Medical Certifiers and functional scope will progress over a six-month timeframe.

The following is a description of the scope of the pilot project in Monroe County:



The goal is to implement the process fully across NYS in 2020. Electronic Amendments will greatly improve the timeliness and quality of data collected by NYSBVR and then disseminated to stakeholders that may be used in shaping public health policies like those relating to opioid use and abuse.

EDRS Address Field and Validation Rule Changes

With the introduction of non-medical facility deaths, there has been an uptick in records reported to the state and federal government with inaccurate addresses. Geocoding is assigned in EDRS based on the locality entered for the resident address, the decedent's birth place, the place of death and the place of injury. Inaccurate data can impact the workflow from case creation to registration, data quality, NYS Public Health statistics, and issues for families in estate closure.

As of September 4, 2019 all users should **use the Places Look-up** tool for the following addresses in EDRS; *Resident Address, Decedent's Birth Place, Place of Death* when *not* auto-populated by a facility address, and *Injury Location* to avoid edit rules. **Users should no longer type the City, Town, Township or Borough** when completing a case.

The **Places Look-up** tool, the house icon to the left of an address, provides filtered drilldown capabilities, eliminating the need to guess at addresses and reducing errors from physical versus mailing address and typographical errors.



In the *Places* window, as you make selections in the dropdown list of values, each subsequent list is filtered by the above selections. Selecting "New York" for the **State** results in the **County** list filtered to only New York State Counties. New York State "County" selection filters the **City** list of values, and so forth. For the Decedent's Birth Place, where no County is not selected, the County is listed after the city, town or village name.

To further support improved data quality, **NYS is modifying specific EDRS 'address' validation rules to hard edits, removing your ability to override the error message.** Use of the **Places Look-up** tool will eliminate errors in data validation.

We realize that removing the ability to override error messages may be cumbersome to some people, however, entering the correct data before validation and registration is very important. In order to assist with address selection and working with the decedent's families, please consider the following:

- The Resident Address selected should be the jurisdiction in which the decedent paid taxes. There is a separate field on the Resident Address page to type a mailing address city, town or village. If a mailing address is keyed, it will appear on the Death Certificate. Explaining this to the decedent's family may alleviate familial concerns for estate closure, taxes, or probate.
- If the address is a district or territory of the United State, such as the District of Columbia or Puerto Rico, the district or territory should be entered in the State field.
- If the Place of Death address, when not auto-populated with a medical facility, is wrong the case will not go to the correct local registrar and may not be registered within the 72-hour window nor generate a burial permit.

If you experience any issues using the **Places Look-up** tool or questions on the appropriate jurisdiction by the decedent's physical resident address, please contact the NYS EDRS team for assistance. email edrs@health.ny.gov.

EDRS NEWSLETTER IS A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, BUREAU OF VITAL RECORDS.

DIRECTOR OF VITAL RECORDS/NEW YORK STATE REGISTRAR: ROBERT 'JAKE' LOCICERO

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF VITAL RECORDS: LENNY KLUZ

EDRS TEAM LEAD: CHRISTOPHER SQUILLACIOTI

EDRS PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION: KIRA CRAMER

FETAL DEATH PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION: JENNIFER PAYEUR

EDRS/FETAL DEATH IMPLEMENTATION & CUSTOMER SUPPORT: KYRIAKOS DIAMANTATOS, SEREAN SMART, IRENE McMAHON, ZINA ADAMS

EDRS TRAINING: LAURIE KROPKOWSKI

EDRS REGISTRATION COORDINATORS: GARY MARTINEZ

EDRS NEWSLETTER EDITOR/TECHNICAL WRITER: LINDA SMITHGALL

Medical Certifiers as Independent Offices

What it is and when to use it

An independent office in EDRS is a medical certifier profile (named after the certifier, him– or herself) representing one licensed medical certifier, who works independent of any other medical practice or facility. Another facility can request non-affiliated medical certification to this individual or the certifier himself can create his own cases.

Many medical certifiers are affiliated with a practice or major medical facilities such as hospitals, nursing homes, or hospice organizations. Before creating your own independent office profile, consider your current affiliations and requests for certification. If you are signing death certificates on behalf of these facilities, you should NOT create an independent office profile.

Unfortunately, numerous medical certifiers have used the *Create My Independent Medical Certifier Office* function to expedite case creation within existing medical facilities. Cases referred to a medical group or facility will not be accessible by you as this independent office, nor will others at that group or facility be able to see cases referred to your independent office.

Again, a medical certifier should only create an independent office for him or herself if not certifying death records affiliated with other medical certifiers, such in a shared practice. Nor should he or she create an independent office when actually affiliated with a hospital.

If you are a licensed medical staff (certifier) in a medical group, practice, nursing home, hospital, or clinic, enroll in EDRS under a new or existing HCS organization.

Only create an independent office profile if you:

- Certify non-affiliated cases independent of an office or facility referred to you from a Coroner or another facility
- Function as a coroner's physician external from a group or facility
- Do not need others within your office to collaborate with you on the same EDRS death records.

The follow scenarios **are problems**:

Scenario 1: John Smith, MD, is a new medical certifier at Albany Medical Center but has not been assigned an EDRS role in the HCS. Dr. Smith accesses EDRS, does not see Albany Medical Center listed on the Office

screen, and creates an independent office thinking he will see Albany Medical Center cases. In actuality, the new office he just created will have a caseload independent of Albany Med. He will not see cases assigned to him to certify from Albany Medical Center at all.

Scenario 2: Maria Cruz is a non-medically licensed coroner in the local county. She needs a coroner's physician to certify a case and works with the county medical examiner's office. She wants to refer the case for non-affiliated medical certification to Dr. Green, but any other ME in the office could certify. She completes a non-affiliated request to Dr. Green in his independent office. Dr. Green is on vacation, so Maria calls the county ME office to have someone else pick up the case, but they cannot access it.

Medical Certifiers — Call to Action

- Only create an independent profile if you meet the situations bulleted above.
- Use your name as the name of the independent office
- Please work closely with your facilities HCS Coordinator to set up your office affiliation with the medical facility before creating your own office.
- Communicate with your non-affiliated partners how to find your independent profile.

Refer to the video tutorial, *Create An Independent Medical Certifier Profile 'Office'* after scrolling down to the EDRS Procedures and Reference Guides section on the [EDRS website for Physicians/Medical Certifiers](#) page.

Contact EDRS by email: edrs@health.ny.gov, or by phone: EDRS Call Center 844-866-EDRS (3377) for questions or assistance.

(Independent Office, continued next column)