NYS EDRS Newsletter

EDRS Support is for EDRS Users

Please **do not share EDRS contact information with the general public**. The EDRS team is available for application technical support only. We do not issue death certificates, locate graves, or share case information with families, the media, or the public.

There are ample resources available to the public and loved ones of the deceased on the NYS Vital Records site. Non-EDRS related inquires put our team in a precarious situation and detracting from our availability to serve you, the EDRS users.

File versus Final

Completing "Pending" Cause of Death Filing

The New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Records (NYSDOH BVR) is performing statewide data inquires on all 2019 and 2020 death certificates that are still in a pending medical investigation status. NYSDOH BVR requires all medical certifiers to update death certificates filed in a pending manner or cause of death status before the end of the first quarter in the following year.

As of February 2021, NYS has over 1,305 death certificates from 2020 still pending medical status. Outreach to all medical certifiers with reported death records in pending status is currently underway. Please respond promptly to all requests from NYSDOH for updates to pending death records.

NYSDOH BVR requires all 2019 and 2020 Death Certificates pending death cases updated by *March 31, 2021*

Correction forms are downloadable from the Forms menu within the EDRS . Fax completed forms to NYSDOH BVR at 518-474-2785 or send via the Secure File Transfer option within the Health Commerce System (HCS).

BACKGROUND

Like many states, NYSDOH BVR transmits thousands of pending records and subsequent updates throughout the year. An autopsy diagnosis may be "pended" to allow for various additional tests, including but not limited to toxicology testing, microscopic examination, and microbiological testing. A case may also be signed as "pending" to collect and evaluate other investigation materials, medical history, and information surrounding the individual's death. Medical certifiers should resolve these cases after the investigation. However, at the time of the state and national mortality file closure, NYS still reports hundreds and sometimes thousands of cases in pending status.

Mortality data is a primary source of information for identifying and monitoring chronic diseases and other public health surveillance. The quality of the cause-of-death information on mortality records has long been a topic of national concern. Recent improvements in timeliness through the extensive use of Electronic Death Registration Systems (EDRS) in New York State provide the ability to improve the quality of the causes of death reported on the death certificate. Timely and quality data is paramount to how NYS monitors statewide mortality and makes decisions to combat novel and existing diseases.

Slowing Down Actually Saves Time

We've all heard the story about the driver who was speeding to get somewhere faster and it ended up taking more time because of being pulled over . EDRS is the same way, if you rush through it, you will miss crucial data that you need to go back and fix. It could just be a validation rule or culminate into back and forth emails and telephone support from the EDRS team, multiple communications between the medical facility and the funeral firm, or the need to submit an amendment after the case is registered. In many situations, the delays could have been avoided if you just slowed down. Below are some scenarios that, if applied, can avoid frustration and delays.

Action: The person affirming gets an "Invalid User" message when trying to sign, certify, or affirm

Issue: The database cannot match the person affirming to the person listed on the designated page for that role (Certifier = *Certifier* page, Funeral Director and Local Registrar = *Disposition* page)

Solution: Make sure the case is updated to match the person completing the case before attempting to affirm.

Action: Data is copied from another electronic source

Issue: Code you can't see, such as hidden symbols and spacing, is carried from one application to another

Solution: As annoying as it may seem, always TYPE the data to avoid getting errors such as with social security numbers, names with internal punctuation (e.g., O'Toole), etc.

Action: Place of Death city/town/village is incorrect

Issue: The **Place of Death** address is the key to the case going to the correct filing office. If registered this way, the case has to be amended to transfer it to the correct Local Registrar.

Solution: This should never happen! The medical certifier should be checking patient records, the Funeral Director should be confirming the address (modifying if incorrect) and the Local Registrar should be confirming the address is in his/her municipality immediately upon accessing the case, before affirming

---

Action: After a case is registered, the realization the name is incorrect

Issue: Your Internet browser autofill changed the case data

Solution: Turn off the AutoFill/AutoComplete setting in your Internet browsers on all electronic apparatus used for EDRS.

Action: Medical certifier changes the top of the *Certifier* page when he/she receives a non-affiliated request

Issue: If the request was from a non-medically licensed coroner, the workflow is broken

Solution: Non-affiliated certifier information auto-populates in the Coroner *is Not a Physician* section when case is accepted. Don't change the **Certifier Type**!

Action: Funeral Firm and/or State have to contact the medical facility or provider to certify a case

Issue: Many times the certifier does the data entry, but does not complete the certification affirmation

Solution: Certifiers should go back to the *Certifier* page, click **Validate Page** then click the **Certify** link in left menu to complete the case. Before exiting the case, check the status bar at the top of the case window (under the decedent name in yellow) to see *Certified* in the middle of the status listings. If you see *Uncertified*, you are not done.

Did you know…

For another party to find the case you entered, they have to enter the key identifying information *exactly* as you typed it? A slight misspelling, adding a middle initial to the First Name field or Suffix to the Last Name field, selecting the wrong sex from the dropdown, or adding punctuation will return no results when searching for a case.

You can avoid multiple calls and emails if you just communicate. When handing off a case, such as from a medical facility to a funeral firm, or a coroner to a non-affiliated certifier, make sure to communicate the *exact typed* information for **First Name**, **Last Name**, **Date of Death**, and **Sex**. Providing the Case ID is also very helpful.

How you type data is how it prints - Use proper capitalization and legal names!

EDRS Support

The EDRS team, about ten people including those focused on compliance and amendments, strives to provide efficient and timely assistance to all of our system users. On average each team member works on 20-25 *new* inquiries per day, many which require multiple emails and telephone calls to resolve. Corrections/ Amendments require review of supporting documentation and communication with submitters, for both electronic and paper submissions. And compliance situations, as you can imagine, can be lengthy and contentious.

Out team works together, assisting for each other, to ensure timely resolution.

Please do not give out individual EDRS team member contact information to the general public, media, family members of the deceased, or to other facilities or firms.

Most of our staff have their work phones forwarded to home or cell phones. Individual team members may provide you a telephone number for a specific inquiry; this is *not* the best way to contact us next time. Calling one person, or giving out his/her telephone number to someone else, may impede resolution of your issue. That person might be training a user, on another support call, in a meeting, or off the clock. And we are not just a call center, each team member has other responsibilities in the Bureau of Vital Records.

EDRS users requesting assistance should be using our team email, *edrs@health.ny.gov* or the main help desk phone number.

Reporting Injuries on the Death Certificate

Source: National Vital Statistics Systems, Division of Vital Statistics, [Newsletters](#), November 2020

When manner of death is reported as Accident, Homicide or Suicide, many times the "Describe How Injury Occurred" item is being reported as "blank." When items are reported as "blank" it is unknown whether the item was skipped or if there was an issue in transmitting that information to NCHS. As of November 2020, 42 out of 57 jurisdictions have at least 1 record where the Manner of Death is reported as Accident, Homicide, or Suicide and the injury description is blank.

NCHS specifications require that this item be completed by the medical certifier and should not be left blank. When this information is not known, "Unknown" should be reported. Otherwise, a clear, brief statement as to how the injury occurred should be included, indicating the circumstances or cause. For example, "Burned using gasoline to light stove," "Slipped and fell while shoveling snow," or "Self-inflicted handgun wound." Please ensure that your EDRS is exporting this information to NCHS. It is also recommended that you reach out to the medical certifiers that are responsible for completing this information when items are left blank.

NYSDOH addition: If the injury occurred during work duties or at a workplace, denote that on the EDRS *Injury* page, including the injury date and time. Be sure to briefly describe the injury (e.g., cutting down a tree to sell firewood, driving a tractor trailer, overdose in work parking lot, suicide related to job loss).

Turn off Internet Browser Autofill/AutoComplete

All EDRS users are advised to *turn off* **Internet browser Autofill/AutoComplete settings** on computers used for the NYS Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS). If you are unsure about how to change this setting, check out this [procedure document](#).

Call to Action: Amendments

The EDRS Amendment function was rolled out to all Medical Examiners and Medically Licensed Coroners in early 2020 and then about six months ago to Funeral Firms. This functionality can be used to submit amendments directly on the case for any record *originally filed electronically*. We continue to receive questions on amendment processing, so please be aware of the following:

All Electronic Amendment Submitters

- The Amendment **must be affirmed** or the amendment will not reach the State for review.

- If the case was originally filed on paper or dropped to paper, submit the amendment on paper.

- It is not the responsibility of the State to initiate or "track down" stakeholders to submit amendments, unless the request is initiated by a Query Letter.

- If you receive a Query Letter, an amendment (either on paper or electronically, as applicable) needs to be submitted.

- Amendments to more than one EDRS page can be submitted on the same amendment

- If there is an urgency to the request, please specify that on the Correction form. Urgent requests are generally limited to Disposition Date/Place changes. Otherwise, allow/anticipate at least 2 *business* days for review and processing. Volume of submissions will impact response time.

NYS hopes to have electronic amendment submittal available to non-licensed coroners and all medical certifiers in the near future. In the meantime, these groups must submit paper Corrections forms via fax or HCS Secure File Transfer. See the NYSDOH Death Certificates webpage or the EDRS *Forms* menu for downloadable Correction Forms.

Funeral Firms/Directors

- Supporting documentation cannot be uploaded in EDRS. You must **send supporting documentation according to the Death Corrections guidelines and via fax or the HCS Secure File Transfer** functionality.

- Do *not* email supporting documents unless instructed to by a State user.

Medical Examiners/Medically Licensed Coroners

- If submitting an amendment to change a non-natural Manner of Death, submit the Injury information with the same amendment.

Local Registrars

- Before issuing a Certified Copy, check the EDRS for amended records. If an amendment exists on an electronically filed record, print the *Vault Copy* and *Registered Death Certificate—without Cause of Death* versions for your files and duplication for issuance.

- Should still be accepting paper Correction Forms, and supporting documentation if applicable, if the original case was field on paper, dropped to paper, or is being submitted by a non-medically licensed Coroner, medical certifier, or the public.

Would you reply to these emails?

"I need help, please call me."

"Can u…"

"urgent phone call"

The EDRS Unit strives to respond to inquiries for assistance as quickly and efficiently as possible. We understand it can be difficult to balance confidentiality with enough user or case information for the EDRS team to efficiently help. Below are some tips for when you email us.

- Provide key information *in your initial inquiry* (e.g., Case ID, provider name, telephone number if you expect a call back) to avoid back and forth emails

- Use complete sentences and avoid "text speak." The EDRS Inbox is not immune to spam and phishing emails; if your message looks like spam, it might go directly to our spam folder.