Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Will an autopsy be performed?
A: The Medical Examiner will perform an autopsy when there is a need to establish cause of death or in cases where criminal proceedings may follow. No autopsy will be performed if the cause of death can be determined to be from natural causes.

Q: Can anyone sign a release form authorizing release of the decedent?
A: No. According to State Law, only the next-of-kin may do so. If the next-of-kin is out of town, he/she may send a telegram or fax to the Medical Examiner’s Office to authorize release.

Q: Who may obtain a copy of the autopsy report?
A: According to the Texas Public Information Act, an Autopsy Report is public information and may be released to anyone who requests a copy.

Q: How can I find out about the cause of death?
A: You may contact the Medical Examiner’s Office at 512.854.9599.

Q: When will a death certificate be issued?
A: The Medical Examiner’s Office will work with the designated funeral home to complete a “pending” death certificate within 10 working days. A final death certificate may take six to eight weeks if the death is being investigated.

Q: Where can I obtain a copy of the death certificate?
A: Death certificates may be obtained from the Bureau of Vital Statistics, the Justice of the Peace, or the funeral home.

Q: Are viewings allowed at the Medical Examiner’s Office?
A: No. The facility is not designed to accommodate viewings. You should contact the funeral home to schedule a time to view your family member or friend.

Who can help?

The Travis County Sheriff’s Office Victim Services Unit can assist you with information regarding your case status, Victims’ Rights, Crime Victim Compensation, navigation of the criminal justice system and referrals to the appropriate community helping professionals or organizations according to your specific needs.

Resources

The Christi Center
512.467.2600
www.christicenter.org

Austin Center for Grief and Loss
512.472.7878
www.austingrief.org

Hospice Austin
512.342.4700
www.hospiceaustin.org

Travis County Medical Examiner’s Office
512.854.9599
www.traviscountytx.gov/medical Examiner

Mailing Address:
P O Box 1748
Austin, TX 78767

Name/ID Number:

Direct Number:
If you have just lost a loved one and the death is being investigated by the Travis County Sheriff’s Office, rest assured the loss of your loved one will be investigated to determine what happened.

Victim Services will likely be contacted in an effort to ensure that you have the support and resources you need during such a difficult time.

**Expected Deaths**

If the death was expected, a detective will most likely not respond to the scene. The case will be reviewed and you will be contacted if he/she has any questions regarding the loss of your loved one.

**Unexpected Deaths**

If the death was unexpected, a detective will most likely respond to the scene to investigate, even if the death appears to be from suicide.

The scene will be treated as a crime scene to protect the integrity of any evidence that might have been left behind.

During the investigation, the detective will likely speak with the person/s who discovered the deceased, in addition to any close friends or family members to learn more about the person who has passed away.

Once the initial investigation is complete, the detective will continue investigating the death and will be in touch with you to keep you updated on any progress.

**Child Deaths**

If the case involves the death of a child, it is important to know that an investigation will be completed by Child Protective Services.