

**Procedure for  
Removals of Deceased from Hospitals and Long-Term Care facilities**

April 9, 2020

Introduction

The Chief Coroner has prepared instructions for Hospitals and Long-Term Care Facilities (LTC) related to the release of dead bodies. They are already hard at work implementing the changes.

Starting Tuesday 14 April 2020, hospitals and LTCs will implement Expedited Death Response Teams (EDRT) or have designated individuals whose job is to expedite the release of the body from the hospital to the funeral and transfer service providers (funeral professionals). **This response is in keeping with the Registrar's direction to accelerate the disposition of deceased individuals and to avoid storage for prolonged periods of time between death and disposition.**

The Office of the Chief Coroner (OCC) has also pulled together a team (OCC Team) to ensure that MCODs are made readily available to decrease the amount of time the deceased patient remains in hospitals and LTCs after death. This team is responsible for providing MCOD electronically in cases where the it can't be provided promptly by the facility where death occurred.

These instructions apply to **ALL DEATHS in hospital / LTC**, not just for individuals who have died from complications due to COVID-19.

What's changed?

1. Hospitals and LTCs have changed their procedures for releasing bodies. **FUNERAL HOME/TRANSFER SERVICE STAFF WILL NO LONGER BE PERMITTED TO ENTER THE HOSPITAL OR LTC.**
2. Each facility has designated a waiting area outside its building where hospital/LTC staff will transfer the deceased to waiting funeral professionals. Funeral professionals must be prepared to give their stretcher to hospital/LTC so that they may transfer the deceased from their care into yours.
3. When a patient dies, the family of the deceased will be instructed by hospital/LTC staff to contact a funeral or transfer service provider. For hospitals, this will take place within an hour of the death. For LTCs it will be a within a maximum of three hours.
4. EDRT will contact funeral providers to alert them of the death and advise that the family will also be in touch. During this phone call they will explain the release procedure, give you the family's contact information and will tell you where the designated waiting area is for their facility. They will also inform you whether or not the death was due to COVID-19.

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5. Funeral professionals should be ready to go to the hospital/LTC within an hour (hospitals) or three hours (LTCs) after taking the first call.
6. When picking up from a hospital, the hospital will supply the body pouch. In the case of LTC, the funeral professional will supply the pouch.
7. Instruct the EDRT that you do not accept responsibility for personal effects and request that they be removed from the deceased during their preparation for release of the body.
8. Where possible, the hospital/LTC will provide a Medical Certificate of Death. In cases where the MCOB cannot be completed/provided at the time of the removal, the OCC Team will provide one electronically to the funeral/transfer service provider. It can then be printed by the funeral professional for use in the death registration process.

**OCC Team: Toll Free: 1 (833) 915-0868 / Local (Toronto): 1 (647) 792-0440**

**Email: [occteam@ontario.ca](mailto:occteam@ontario.ca)**

**How will the Hospital/LTC Staff ensure the process is safe and runs smoothly?**

1. The deceased will be placed in a body pouch by hospital/LTC staff in his/her room\*.
2. Hospital/LTC staff will ensure the deceased is labelled.
3. The deceased will be transferred to a stretcher\*\*.
4. The body pouch will be disinfected using protocols set out by the institution.
5. The identity of the deceased will be confirmed by hospital staff using a tag/bracelet affixed both to the deceased and to the body pouch.
6. Body pouches containing a deceased who died from confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 will be marked/tagged by hospital/LTC staff.
7. The deceased will be transferred from their room/morgue to the pre-determined, designated area and received by the funeral professional.

\*Funeral professionals should be prepared to provide their own body pouch, especially in the case of LTCs. The handoff of the decedent enclosed in the body pouch will take place in the pre-determined, designated area outside of the facility.

\*\*The funeral professional will need to provide their stretcher to the hospital/LTC staff upon arrival at the predetermined, designated waiting area. The hospital/LTC staff will bring the stretcher to the patient's room or morgue and transfer the deceased onto the funeral professional's stretcher.

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**What hasn't changed?**

1. You will still be expected to confirm the identity of the deceased.
2. When you get the deceased back to the funeral home/holding room, re-confirm the identity of deceased and check all tags/bracelets.
3. You will still be expected to provide your own and correctly use PPE.

**What are your responsibilities?**

1. The stretcher cover should be removed from the stretcher before going to the hospital/LTC.
2. Have a body pouch available.
3. Make sure you have personal protective equipment (PPE) with you and use it. This includes gowns, gloves, hair cover, masks, shoe covers. Many funeral professionals are double gloving.
4. Perform hand hygiene before and after putting on or taking off PPE.
5. You will not be permitted to enter the hospital/LTC so hand washing may not be possible. You must bring your own alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
6. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are following the instructions of EDRT at the facility from which you are removing the deceased.
7. Before you hand over your stretcher to the facility's staff, give the facility staff instructions on its use before they take it away. Remember, these people are already trained in moving people, but may not be familiar with operating your stretcher.
8. Your vehicle should be stocked with disinfectant or bleach solution for spraying the stretcher and exterior of the body pouch and plastic cover if using one.
9. Remove PPE and dispose of it safely. If no receptacle is available at the facility, ensure that you have an adequate container in which to put used PPE for proper disposal back at your facility.
10. Use hand sanitizer.
11. Bring the deceased back to your facility.
12. Whether the death was due to COVID-19 or not, assume the possibility for infection exists and disinfect all equipment used during the transfer, including the stretcher and interior of your vehicle. Use PPE when completing this task.
13. Once in your facility and while wearing PPE, re-confirm the identity of the deceased by checking all hospital tags.

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| PUTTING ON PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT  |                               |  |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| 1   | PERFORM HAND HYGIENE          |  |
| 2   | PUT ON GOWN                   |  |
| 3   | PUT ON MASK OR N95 RESPIRATOR |  |
| 4   | PUT ON EYE PROTECTION         |  |
| 5   | PUT ON GLOVES                 |  |
|   |                               |  |
| <a href="http://www.oahpp.ca">www.oahpp.ca</a>  |                               |  |

  

| REMOVING PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT |                               |  |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| 1                                      | REMOVE GLOVES                 |  |
| 2                                      | REMOVE GOWN                   |  |
| 3                                      | PERFORM HAND HYGIENE          |  |
| 4                                      | REMOVE EYE PROTECTION         |  |
| 5                                      | REMOVE MASK OR N95 RESPIRATOR |  |
| 6                                      | PERFORM HAND HYGIENE          |  |