



**NYC**  
**Office of Chief  
Medical Examiner**

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** March 25, 2020

**TO:** NYC HOSPITALS; NYC NURSING HOMES AND OTHER LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES; GREATER NEW YORK HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

**FROM:** Jason Graham, MD  
First Deputy Chief Medical Examiner

**RE: SUSPECTED COVID-19 DEATHS IN HEALTHCARE FACILITIES**

Regarding in-hospital deaths considered possible or suspected due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), these cases are considered natural deaths and do **NOT** fall within the medicolegal jurisdiction of the NYC Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME). As such, these deaths do **NOT** need to be reported to the OCME.

The only deaths reportable to the OCME are those cases which would possibly fall under medical examiner jurisdiction based upon previously established historic medicolegal criteria, such as any case in which an injury of any sort contributes to the death, deaths in custody, therapeutic complications, etc., regardless of COVID status. Please keep in mind that these are not mutually exclusive conditions, such as when someone is admitted to the hospital and is being treated for injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident who becomes symptomatic and dies with COVID-19; such cases should be reported to the OCME based upon case presentation with significant injuries.

All deaths from possible or confirmed COVID-19 should be reported to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) through the usual mechanism of reporting cause of death information (i.e., through the eVital system, DOHMH's electronic reporting system for death records; see <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/reporting-and-services/evital.page>) in accordance with Article 205 of the New York City Health Code.

As the OCME has historically done at the request of the NYC DOHMH during disease outbreaks, in certain cases for which the diagnosis is in question or in which additional postmortem studies are needed in order to confirm novel coronavirus infection, the OCME may accept such a case for autopsy. This possibility will remain on a case-by-case basis and **exclusively** at the request of the NYC DOHMH with whom we are working closely.

Please provide this information to your staff, and should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me with your concerns. Thank you for your cooperation.