

DEATH CERTIFICATES – TRAINING & PROCESS

Notice to all Physicians, Physician Assistants and Interns:

- The Arizona Department of Health Services, Bureau of Vital Records needs your assistance with providing medical certification (cause of death) on death certificates within 72 hours §A.R.S. 36-325(G) after death. This is requested through the state's Database Application for Vital Events (DAVE) electronic system when you are identified as the current care health care provider. Medical certification is an important part of the death registration process and aids families making funeral arrangements and closing out the business affairs of the deceased. Furthermore, the information from the cause of death is tracked and used by county, state and the Centers for Disease Control to track increases and decreases in the death rate and to provide funding to the states for various prevention programs.
- For more information about the DAVE system and how to complete medical certification on the death certificate, or to access training, please visit the DAVE System Medical Certifier page on the Arizona Department of Health Services, Bureau of Vital Records website at <https://www.azdhs.gov/licensing/vital-records/index.php#dave-medical>. There is also a video that walks you through how to provide medical certification on the death record.
- Please provide medical certification on the death certificates as quickly as possible, and within the 72 hours required by law. A.R.S. § 36-325, referenced below.
- If you need assistance with determining the cause of death, please reference the materials provided by the CDC including the Physicians' Handbook on Medical Certification of Death [Physicians' Handbook on Medical Certification of Death \(4/2003\) \(cdc.gov\)](#) .

Important Note: Arizona Revised Statute 32-325 N. states that "A healthcare provider who completes and signs a medical certification of death in good faith pursuant to this section is not subject to civil liability or professional disciplinary action."

Applicable Laws:

The following are some of the applicable death registration laws:

A.R.S § 36-301(8) states:

- **Current care** means that a health care provider has examined, treated or provided care for a person for a chronic or acute condition within eighteen months preceding that person's

death. Current care does not include services provided in connection with a single event of emergency or urgent care. For the purposes of this paragraph, "treated" includes prescribing medication.

- A.R.S. § 36-325(G, H and N) states:

G. If a person under the current care of a health care provider for an acute or chronic medical condition dies of that condition, or complications associated with that condition, the health care provider or a health care provider designated by that provider shall complete and sign the medical certification of death on a death certificate within seventy-two hours. If current care has not been provided, the medical examiner shall complete and sign the medical certification of death on a death certificate within seventy-two hours after the examination, excluding weekends and holidays.

H. If a person dies in a hospital, nursing care institution or hospice inpatient facility of natural causes, the hospital, nursing care institution or facility shall designate a health care provider to complete and sign the medical certification of death within seventy-two hours.

N. A health care provider who completes and signs a medical certification of death in good faith pursuant to this section is not subject to civil liability or professional disciplinary action.