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California Department of Public Health



GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor

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20-05

TO: LOCAL HEALTH OFFICERS
LOCAL REGISTRARS OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS
CHIEF DEPUTY REGISTRARS OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS
COUNTY CORONERS
FUNERAL HOMES

SUBJECT: GUIDANCE FOR CERTIFYING COVID-19 RELATED DEATHS IN CALIFORNIA

This All County Letter provides guidance reflecting the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) interim guidance for certifying and reporting cause of death information for Coronavirus Disease 2019 related deaths. CDC is working on formal guidance to certifiers to be published as soon as possible.

It is important to emphasize that **Coronavirus Disease 2019** or **COVID-19** should be reported on the death certificate for all decedents where the disease caused or is assumed to have caused or contributed to death. Other terminology, e.g., SARS-CoV-2, can be used as long as it is clear that it indicates the 2019 coronavirus strain; however, use of World Health Organization's standard terminology, e.g., **COVID-19 is recommended**.

Specification of the causal pathway leading to death in Field 107 A-D CAUSE OF DEATH, on California's Death Certificate is also important. For example, in cases when COVID-19 causes pneumonia and fatal respiratory distress, both pneumonia and respiratory distress should be included along with COVID-19 in the 107 A-D CAUSE OF DEATH.

Certifiers should include as much detail as possible based on their knowledge of the case, medical records, laboratory testing, etc. If the decedent had other chronic conditions such as COPD or asthma that may have also contributed, these conditions can be reported in Field 112: OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH BUT NOT RESULTING IN THE UNDERLYING CAUSE GIVEN IN 107. An example is shown in the table below.



Example 1.

Box 107: Cause of Death	Duration
A) Acute respiratory distress syndrome	2 days
(due to)	
B) Pneumonia	10 days
(due to)	
C) COVID-19	10 days
(due to)	
D)	
Box 112: Other Significant Conditions Contributing To Death, But Not Resulting in the Underlying Cause Given in 107	
History of COPD	

For any questions regarding this matter, please contact California Department of Public Health – Vital Records (CDPH-VR) customer service at (916) 445-2684.

Sincerely,

Original signed by Tony Agurto for

Jim Greene, MD, MS
State Registrar
Deputy Director
Center for Health Statistics and Informatics