



**LAC DPH Health Information
Certifying Deaths Due to COVID-19**

July 3, 2023



This message is intended for all physicians that may be asked to certify the cause of death.

Please distribute as appropriate.

Key Messages

- Death certificates will be the primary means of tracking COVID-19 deaths in Los Angeles County. This is in alignment with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- If COVID-19 played a role in the death, it is important that the medical certifier reports it on the death certificate.

Situation

In using death certificates as the primary means of tracking COVID-19 deaths, it is important that when COVID-19 contributed to a death that it be reported on the death certificate. This will allow public health agencies at the local, state, and federal levels to accurately assess COVID-19 trends and appropriately direct public health response.

The CDC guidance on [certifying deaths due to COVID-19](#) instructs medical certifiers to include COVID-19 if it was an underlying cause of death or if it was a significant condition that contributed to the death. When a definitive diagnosis cannot be made but it is suspected that COVID-19 played a role in the death, it is acceptable to report COVID-19 on a death certificate as “probable” or “presumed”. In addition, the CDC instructs certifiers to include “post-acute sequelae of COVID-19” on the death certificate if the death may have been due to long-term complications of COVID-19, even if the original infection occurred months or years before death.

See CDC website [Reporting and Coding Deaths Due to COVID-19](#) for detailed information and instructional videos.

This communication was sent by Dr. Sharon Balter, Director, Division of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

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