



MEMORANDUM

To: MD-EDRS Medical Certifiers
From: Lee Hurt, Director, Vital Statistics Administration
Subject: FEMA Funeral Reimbursement Program for COVID-19 Related Deaths
Date: 4/8/2021

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has announced plans to reimburse households for funeral expenses incurred for decedents whose death was attributed to COVID-19. A household member may submit to be reimbursed up to \$9,000 for funeral related expenses for decedents whose death certificate includes COVID-19 or Probable COVID-19 (or other similar terms) among the causes of death. The household member must include a copy of the death certificate in their application to FEMA.

The Vital Statistics Administration (VSA) anticipates that family members may reach out to medical certifiers to request that they amend their relative's death certificate to add COVID-19 or Probable COVID-19 to the death record. We would like to remind all medical certifiers that it is their responsibility to enter the cause of death information as accurately as possible based on the clinical indications. We recognize that early in the pandemic, when testing was very limited, there may have been cases of COVID-19 that were overlooked. Amending these records to include a Probable COVID-19 may be appropriate if the other clinical indications warrant this amendment. However, as testing became more available, amendments to death records seem less appropriate, and would impact our public health reporting of the pandemic in Maryland.

Should you need to amend the cause of death information on a previously registered death record, please email the attached Supplemental Report of Cause of Death to EDRS.HELP@maryland.gov.

I have included below, our original guidance (based on CDC recommendations) regarding the inclusion of COVID-19 on the death record.

We are requesting your assistance in accurately and consistently reporting deaths related to COVID-19.

- All confirmed cases of COVID-19 should be listed as "**COVID-19**" on the death certificate in the causal pathway leading to death and then attested.
- All probable cases of COVID-19, where the test results are still awaited, should be listed as "**PROBABLE COVID-19**" on the death certificate.
 - Probable cases should be corrected as soon as the test results are returned and then attested.
- If it is not possible to obtain a test for COVID-19 for the decedent, but the signs and symptoms strongly indicate that the death was COVID-19 related, then please enter "**PROBABLE COVID-19**" on the certificate and attest.

- For individuals that arrive at the emergency department DOA with prior symptoms that suggest a probable case of COVID-19, but without prior test results, it is recommended that an NP swab be collected and sent to the Maryland Department of Health Laboratories Administration.
- We ask that you enter these exact terms and do not include other terms such as “AWAITING COVID-19 RESULTS” or “COVID-19 negative”. These are not acceptable cause of death entries.
- We remind you that infectious disease deaths are a natural manner of death, and ***should not be referred to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME)***. It is the statutory responsibility of the clinician that last attended a decedent to certify the cause of death for deaths due to infectious diseases.

If you have any questions on how to report COVID-19 on the death certificate, please email Jasmine Lampadarios at jasmine.lampadarios@maryland.gov. If you need assistance with MD-EDRS, please contact the MD-EDRS Help Desk at edrs.help@maryland.gov.