

Morgue Procedure - St. Paul Campus

Purpose

This procedure provides step-by-step instructions to Lab Staff on the St. Paul Campus following the death of a patient. It provides information on how to complete and handle the accompanying documentation needed by Pathology, and how to handle the reception, transfer, and release of patient remains at the St. Paul Morgue. *This procedure applies to St. Paul only.*

Policy Statement

The bodies of deceased patients are released only from the Morgue. This is to ensure that the deceased patient's remains are handled with respect and discretion, that patients' remains are properly preserved in the event of autopsy, and that the hospital has an appropriate chain of custody established for each deceased patient.

Release of a patient's remains from a hospital unit other than the Morgue requires Pathology approval.

Procedure

The procedure for handling common situations involving the Morgue follows below. There are four parts to the procedure; select the part appropriate to your situation.

- PART ONE: Deceased Patient Arrives at Laboratory
- PART TWO: Mortician/ME Arrives to Pick Up Patient
- PART THREE: Mortician Arrives to Transport Patient for Children's Pathologist Autopsy
- PART FOUR: Hospital Staff Sign Out/Sign In Deceased Patient Before/After Viewing

PART ONE: Deceased Patient Arrives at Laboratory

Deceased Patient Arrives at Lab

Step	Activity	Related Document
1	<p>When Hospital Staff bring a deceased patient to the lab, Hospital Staff sign the patient into the Morgue Log (White Book, left side of page). The entry must include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Patient name/MRN 2. Date/time of arrival at lab 3. Hospital Staff/Patient Unit 4. Name of Hospital Staff transporting patient to the Morgue 	<p>St. Paul Morgue Procedure Checklist: [paste link to procedure here.]</p>
2	<p>With Lab Staff looking on to ensure completeness, Hospital Staff complete the Death Register (Red Book, left page). Hospital Staff must include all of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Patient name (Last, First) 2. Date/time of death 3. Patient MRN 4. Patient care provider/pronouncing provider 5. (Children's) Autopsy: Y/N 6. Release: Y/N/ME only <p>Lab Staff should review the Death Register entry to ensure that it is correctly completed.</p>	

Death Register Completion and Autopsy Status

	<p>Ask the Hospital Staff to provide all accompanying paperwork for the patient. NOTE: No paperwork should be placed with the patient in the Morgue.</p> <p>Autopsy Status</p> <p>ASK: "Is the patient to be autopsied at Children's Minnesota by our pathologist, or is this a Medical Examiner case?"</p> <p>To note the patient's autopsy status in the Death Register, refer to the table below:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Situation</th> <th>Children's Autopsy Y/N</th> <th>Release Y/N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>No to Children's Autopsy and ME</td> <td>N</td> <td>Y</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Yes to Children's Autopsy</td> <td>Y</td> <td>N</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ME Case</td> <td>N</td> <td>ME only</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>*In all cases, contact Minneapolis Pathology at x5-6711 to alert them that there is a patient in the Morgue. Include the patient's name and medical record number in your message. This is particularly important if there is a request for autopsy by a Children's pathologist.</p> <p>If routed to voicemail or for calls outside regular office hours, 24 hours/7 days a week, <i>leave a message</i>.</p>	Situation	Children's Autopsy Y/N	Release Y/N	No to Children's Autopsy and ME	N	Y	Yes to Children's Autopsy	Y	N	ME Case	N	ME only	
Situation	Children's Autopsy Y/N	Release Y/N												
No to Children's Autopsy and ME	N	Y												
Yes to Children's Autopsy	Y	N												
ME Case	N	ME only												
<p>Autopsy Authorization Form and Patient Paperwork</p>	<p>2 a. a. If the patient is to be autopsied at Children's, an Autopsy Authorization Form (Authorization or Denial of Autopsy) must be completed in full (including any restrictions, even if there are none), signed by the parent or next of kin, and witnessed by hospital staff.</p> <p>If hospital staff indicate that the child is to be autopsied at Children's, and they do not have the form with them, inform them that <i>Pathology must have the properly completed form before the autopsy can proceed -- no exceptions.</i></p> <p>2 b. b. PLACE THE COMPLETED AUTOPSY AUTHORIZATION FORM AND ANY OTHER PAPERWORK IN AN INTEROFFICE ENVELOPE AND SEND IT VIA LAB COURIER TO MINNEAPOLIS PATHOLOGY.</p> <p>2 c. c. Refer anyone with questions about Children's autopsy or completion of the autopsy form to Pathology, x5-6711.</p>	<p>Autopsy Authorization Form: https://starnet.childrenshc.org/references/MR/admin/consent/laboratory-authorization-denial-for-autopsy.pdf</p>												
<p>Placing Body in Morgue</p>	<p>3 Lab Staff takes the Morgue Key, and escorts Hospital Staff with patient body to the Morgue.</p> <p>NOTE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only Lab Staff and Pathology handle the Morgue Key - <u>no one else.</u> • Hospital Staff are to place the body in the refrigerator. Lab Staff are not responsible for handling deceased 													

	<p>patients, but may assist with the placement of a patient only if Lab Staff are comfortable doing so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small children can be placed on the top shelf. • Larger patients go on the covered gurney -- under the cover. • REMEMBER: Send the Autopsy Authorization Form and/or all clinical paperwork via Lab Courier to Minneapolis Pathology. 	
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PART TWO: Mortician/ME Arrives to Pick Up Deceased Patient

Mortician/ME Security Escort

1	When a Mortician/ME arrives at laboratory to request pickup, if they are not already accompanied by Security, call Security to request escort x1-8966 (Security non-emergency number).	
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Mortician/ME Completes Death Register

2	<p>Mortician/ME are to complete the right page of Death Register to sign out the patient. Lab Staff should review the Death Register to ensure that Mortician/ME has properly completed all fields, then Lab Staff should write their initials in the space provided when completed.</p> <p>Morticians then should complete a Certificate of Removal for Lab Staff to sign/date, and give Lab Staff a copy to pass on to Minneapolis Pathology. <i>ME's may provide a Certificate of Removal, but they are not required to do so.</i></p> <p>NOTE: If ME or any other outside investigative authority (police, for example) are requesting blood samples, Lab Staff will need to complete and have the ME/police sign the Specimen Request Form. To complete this form, please refer to GL 4.0 Specimens Requested by an Outside Authority (see links on the right).</p>	<p>Procedure - GL 4.0 Specimens Requested by an Outside Authority: https://starnet.childrenshc.org/References/lab-sop/gen/gen/gl-4.0-specimens-requested-by-an-outside-authority.pdf</p> <p>Specimen Request Form: G:\Anatomic Pathology\gl-4.0.f1-specimen-request-log.pdf</p>
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Releasing Body from Morgue

3	<p>Lab Staff takes the Morgue Key and accompany the mortician/ME to the Morgue.</p> <p>Lab Staff should see to it that the Mortician/ME confirm by reviewing the tag on the body bag that the identity of the patient is correct.</p>	
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Security Escort Out of Hospital

4	<p>Security should escort the Mortician/ME out of the hospital.</p> <p>NOTE: If smaller patients can be discreetly removed by a mortician in a suitable container from the hospital via public exits, we can permit this. HOWEVER...larger patients (body requiring a cart/gurney) must be removed from the hospital via the 2nd floor back door to Thompson Street - NO EXCEPTIONS.</p> <p>The Medical Examiner (ME) MUST REMOVE ALL PATIENTS, REGARDLESS OF SIZE, VIA THOMPSON STREET - NO EXCEPTIONS.</p> <p>Send the copy of the Certificate of Removal via lab courier to Minneapolis Pathology.</p>	
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PART THREE: Mortician Arrives to Transport Patient for Children's Minnesota Pathologist Autopsy

Removal for Children's Autopsy

	<p>All Children's pathologist autopsies are performed in the Minneapolis Morgue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnson Funeral Car or another mortuary service will arrive at the St. Paul Lab to take body to the Minneapolis hospital. • Proceed with the removal service as you would with any other mortician/ME pickup. Refer to Part Two above for procedure. <p>NOTE: St. Paul patients who come to Minneapolis for Children's pathologist autopsy will be released to mortuaries from the Minneapolis Morgue -- they will not be returned to St. Paul.</p> <p>Refer any mortician inquiring about the disposition of a deceased child to Minneapolis Pathology, 612-813-6711.</p>	
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PART FOUR: Hospital Staff Sign Out/Sign In Deceased Patient Before/After Viewing

Hospital Staff Arrives to Sign Out Body (White Book Only)

1	<p>When Hospital Staff arrive at the lab to remove a patient from the Morgue for viewing, photos, etc., Hospital Staff must sign out the patient in the Morgue Log (White Book, right side of page) next to the corresponding patient's sign-in.</p> <p>NOTE: As with any removal, Hospital Staff should call Security for an escort to and from the room designated for viewing.</p>	
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Hospital Staff Retrieves Body

2	<p>Lab Staff takes the Morgue Key and accompany Hospital Staff to the Morgue. Hospital Staff should review tag on body bag to ensure the identity of the patient. Hospital Staff discreetly remove the body from the Morgue.</p> <p>NOTE: Lab Staff are not required to handle or assist with the moving of a deceased patient, but may assist if comfortable.</p>	
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Hospital Staff Returns and Signs in Body (White Book Only)

3	<p>When viewing is complete, Hospital Staff arrive with the patient at the laboratory to return the patient to the Morgue. Hospital Staff then must sign in the patient in the Morgue Log (White Book, left side of page, on a new line).</p>	
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Returning Body to Morgue

4	<p>After the patient has been re-signed into the Morgue Log, Lab Staff takes the Morgue Key and accompanies the Hospital Staff with the body to the Morgue. Hospital Staff places the body back in the Morgue.</p>	
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Additional Information

Death Register vs. Morgue Log:

The **Death Register** is a legal document which can be subpoenaed as evidence in court. Therefore, it is very important for Lab Staff to ensure that it is completed correctly.

The **Morgue Log** is not a legal document, but it is also important, since it is our way to preserve the

"chain of evidence" in the event that a child's body is removed for viewing or photography.

No Children's Autopsy: If there is *not* to be a Children's autopsy, or if the child is to be released to the Medical Examiner for autopsy, it is *not* necessary for Hospital Staff to complete the Autopsy Authorization Form. Call Minneapolis Pathology (x5-6711) to confirm that there is a deceased patient in the Morgue that can be released (outside regular business hours leave a voicemail message, and include the patient's name and medical record number). *The Autopsy Authorization Form is only for those cases in which a Children's pathologist is to perform the autopsy.* Please call Pathology at x5-6711 with any questions about this.

No Viewing Room in St. Paul: There is no viewing room for parents/relatives/guardians in the St. Paul hospital. Hospital Staff must remove bodies to be viewed, photographed, etc. to an unoccupied room in the hospital, and return the patient to the Morgue after this is completed. NOTE: When Hospital Staff return a body, they must also sign the patient in the Morgue Log (white book) on the left on a new line -- just as if they were signing in a body for the first time. This completes the lab's "chain of evidence" as to the disposition of the patient's body within the hospital (for step-by-step instructions, see Part Four of this procedure).

ANY Questions/Problems/Concerns: Please contact Pathology with any questions, problems, or concerns at **x5-6711**.

- **M-F 6am-5pm** Call Pathology **x5-6711** or, if no answer during these hours, call Histology **x5-5875**.
- **If a patient IS to be autopsied by Children's pathology:** Call **x5-6711** and leave a message. Include: Patient Name and Medical Record Number, and indicate that the child is to be autopsied at Children's. Send the Autopsy Authorization Form and any other paperwork brought down with the patient via lab courier to Minneapolis Pathology.
- **If a patient IS NOT to be autopsied by Children's pathology and can be released to a mortuary,** call **x5-6711** to inform the Pathology Support Specialists that there is a patient in the St. Paul Morgue and that the patient will not be autopsied by our pathologists and can be released (please include patient name and medical record number).
- **If any patient set to be released to a mortuary is in the Morgue for more than two business days,** please call Pathology **x5-6711**. Pathology will coordinate with Social Work to ensure that the child is picked up.
- **If you require immediate assistance outside regular office hours (M-F 8:00 - 17:00),** page the on-call Histologist (weekends only), or the on-call Pathologist (weekdays after regular office hours and on holidays).

NOTE: DO NOT CALL the on-call pathologist simply to inform them that a patient has been placed in the Morgue. *Call the pathologist for complex/confusing/urgent situations only.*

This procedure applies ONLY to the St. Paul Morgue: The Minneapolis Lab is not involved with the disposition of deceased patients (see <https://starnet.childrenshc.org/References/labsop/his/autproc/a1.05-morgue-procedure-csc.pdf> for Minneapolis Morgue procedures).

References

Historical Record

Version	Written/Revised by:	Effective Date:	Summary of Revisions
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1	Douglas Shambo	10/7/2022	Initial Version
2			