

OCME Contact Information

For general information and assistance, you may contact OCME 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 212-447-2030.

Additional Resources and Support

OCME maintains a list of agencies and charitable organizations offering resources for grief counseling, victims services, and burial assistance.

For more information, please visit our website at nyc.gov/ocme or call the **Outreach Unit at 212-323-1350**. The Outreach Unit is available daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Notes:



Death Certificates, Autopsy Reports, and Personal Property

What if I cannot make funeral arrangements?

Resources may be available to help with the burial/cremation of your loved one. If you are unable to make funeral arrangements or need additional time, please call our **Outreach Unit at 212-323-1350** for further guidance. The Outreach Unit is available daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

How do I obtain a death certificate?

Your funeral director can help you obtain copies of the death certificate. The death certificate may also be obtained directly through the **NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DOHMH) Bureau of Vital Statistics**. For information on obtaining a death certificate through DOHMH, call 311 or visit www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/services/death-certificates.page.

How do I obtain the results of the exam?

The cause and manner of death will be reported on the death certificate. In cases where an autopsy is performed, a copy of the autopsy report (including all referenced laboratory reports) is available free of charge and may be requested by next of kin online at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/ocme/records-requests/records-requests-familynok.page>.

Most autopsy reports and their associated laboratory reports are completed and ready to send within 90 days, but some cases require more time to finalize all test reports. After the examination concludes, should there be additional questions about the findings, the next of kin may call the **Forensic Pathology Coordinators through the OCME main line at 212-447-2030**.

What does it mean if the cause of death on the death certificate is "pending further study"?

Often, the Medical Examiner needs to perform additional tests to determine the cause and/or manner of your loved one's death. In this case, the initial cause and manner of death on the death certificate may read "Pending Further Study." Additional testing may include microbiology cultures, toxicology testing, examining tissue samples under a microscope, and/or review of medical records or additional investigative reports.

When the Medical Examiner has received and reviewed the results of the additional tests, an autopsy report is issued, and the death certificate is amended to reflect the cause and manner of death. Most investigations are completed within 90 days, though some will take longer. Please note that you do not need to wait for the amended death certificate for your loved one to be released to a funeral home.

Where is my loved one's personal property held?

When a person dies outside a healthcare facility and in the absence of family, personal property may be secured in the residence or brought to the police in the precinct where the death occurred; from there it is transferred to the New York City Police Department (NYPD) Property Clerk. If your loved one died at a healthcare facility, any personal property that was on or with them upon admission will generally be secured by that facility. OCME staff can provide you with the name and phone number of the appropriate agency/facility for follow-up.

Personal property including clothing and other items that may have been transported to OCME are subsequently released to the funeral home at the time your loved one is released. In cases of homicide or suspicious circumstances, property may be held by NYPD as evidence.

Serving Families and Communities During Times of Profound Need

Investigator:

Forensic Pathology Center:

OCME Case Number:

The case number is helpful when calling OCME.



Why is OCME Involved?

The Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) is responsible for investigating all deaths of persons in New York City that result from criminal violence, accidents, suicide, sudden occurrences while in apparent good health, unattended by a physician, in correctional facilities, or any unusual or suspicious circumstances.

OCME protects public health and serves impartial justice through forensic science and medicine. Our independent investigations of deaths and analysis of evidence provide answers to families and communities during times of profound need.

Where is my loved one being taken?

Depending on the location and circumstances of death, your loved one will be transported to one of three OCME centers for examination and/or storage. These centers are located in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. An OCME case number will be assigned and provided to you for your reference, along with the location to which your loved one will be transported.

If you have questions about the current location of your loved one, please contact the **24/7 Communications Unit through the OCME main line at 212-447-2030**.

Examination, Identification, and Release Procedures

Is an autopsy required?

A Medical Examiner (forensic pathologist) will be assigned to examine your loved one, typically the morning after their arrival at the Forensic Pathology Center. This Medical Examiner will be responsible for determining cause and manner of death. An autopsy may be performed to make the determination.

An autopsy is an external and internal examination of the decedent. During an autopsy, the Medical Examiner may retain specimens for diagnostic testing. None of these tests will prevent your loved one from being released for funeral arrangements, and the autopsy will not interfere with funeral viewing. In most cases, the decision to perform an autopsy will not cause any delay in releasing your loved one to the funeral home.

If you object to an autopsy being performed, you should notify OCME as soon as possible by calling our **24/7 Communications Unit through the OCME main line at 212-447-2030**. The final decision about whether to perform an autopsy is made by the Medical Examiner, who may reach out to you for further discussion.

When can my loved one be released to a funeral home?

Your loved one can be released after an examination concludes and identification requirements are met. In most cases, your loved one will be examined and ready for release on the day following arrival at OCME. However, some cases require more time. You may check on the status of your loved one by contacting the **Medical Examiner Support Unit through the OCME main line at 212-447-2030**. Your loved one must be released to a licensed funeral director.

Who can claim a decedent for funeral arrangements?

Person(s) who may be eligible to make funeral arrangements include those appointed in a written document by the decedent, a spouse or domestic partner, adult children, parents, siblings, or other persons or organizations acting on behalf of the decedent. For information on claiming your loved one under New York State Public Health Law, please consult a funeral director or attorney.

What is the decedent identification procedure?

Each person for whom the OCME issues a death certificate has an identification requirement. Identification of your loved one can be accomplished in a few ways, including fingerprints, visual identification, medical and dental records, or DNA comparison. The identification method will vary depending on the circumstances. Family members do not need to visit an OCME facility to confirm a loved one's identification in most cases. On the date of the examination, you will be contacted by an OCME representative who will provide further guidance.

During this conversation, you may also be asked to provide or confirm demographic information that will be used for both decedent identification and death certification, such as the decedent's full legal name and date of birth. If OCME determines that an in-person visit is needed to complete the identification, a member of the staff will contact you to coordinate an appointment at one of our family service centers.

Who at OCME responds to the scene of death?

When a death occurs outside a healthcare facility (and in some healthcare facility cases), you may see or meet with a Medicolegal Investigator (MLI) and/or a member of the Medical Examiner Transportation Team (METT).

Medicolegal Investigator

The Medicolegal Investigator collects information to assist the Medical Examiner in determining the cause and manner of death. The MLI investigates the scene where the death occurred and may interview you to obtain important information on the decedent's history. This may include information such as medical and social history and the events leading up to their death. The Medicolegal Investigator works for OCME and is not a police officer.

Medical Examiner Transportation Team

The METT handles the transport of a decedent from their place of death to one of our forensic pathology centers. The METT utilizes specialized equipment to transfer your loved one in a dignified and professional manner.

Where can I view my loved one?

Family members wishing to view their loved one are encouraged to contact a funeral director who can assist with final arrangements and viewing at a funeral home.