

# Death in the Home RN Pronouncement

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Home Health VNA  
Merrimack Valley Hospice  
HomeCare, Inc.



The Leaders in Home Health and Hospice Care

# Objectives

- ▶ The participant will be able to describe the pronunciation procedure

# Pronouncement

- ▶ Registered nurses employed by MVH/YHHPC may make the pronouncement of death, in accordance with applicable state laws

# Pronouncement

- ▶ All deaths of MVH/YHHPC patients in the home require a visit by a RN to complete the pronouncement of death for patients in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and the determination of lack of vital signs in Maine.

# Pronouncement

- ▶ For patients in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, the time of pronouncement is the official time of death
- ▶ IDT staff will provide support and comfort to the family/caregivers

# Pronouncement

- ▶ MVH/YHHPC clinical staff will discuss with the patient/family, the anticipated death and funeral plans
- ▶ MVH/YHHPC staff will encourage the patient/family to make arrangements in advance, to ensure that the patient's wishes are acknowledged and respected, as well as to prevent the need for decision-making at the time of death

# Pronouncement

- ▶ Families/caregivers are instructed to call MVH/YHHPC at the time of death
- ▶ When MVH/YHHPC is notified that the patient has died, a RN will make a home visit
- ▶ The RN will confirm the death by assessing the patient's vital signs

# Pronouncement

- ▶ The RN will obtain information from the family/caregiver regarding the circumstances of the patient's death
- ▶ After the patient's death has been confirmed, the physician or medical examiner is notified



# Pronouncement

- ▶ In Massachusetts, the medical examiner must be notified in the case of the death of a child under 18 years of age. The 24 hour telephone number is 617-267-6767
- ▶ You will be prompted for information regarding the deceased
- ▶ The medical examiner will inquire as to the circumstances of the death and decide whether to take jurisdiction

# Pronouncement

- ▶ If the medical examiner does not take jurisdiction, the deceased may be released to the funeral home
- ▶ If the medical examiner takes jurisdiction, the medical examiner will take possession of the deceased

# Pronouncement

- ▶ In Massachusetts and New Hampshire, the RN will make the formal pronouncement of death, completing all required documentation
- ▶ For Massachusetts patients, the form for pronouncement of death is the Pronouncement of Death Form by the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

# Pronouncement

- ▶ It is completed according to the instructions on the reverse side of the form
- ▶ For New Hampshire patients the form completed for the pronouncement of death is the Certificate of Death
- ▶ Only Sections 22–26B and item 32 are completed according to the instructions on the back of the form
- ▶ The deceased cannot be transported across county lines without a completed death certificate

# Pronouncement

- ▶ The death certificate must be completed by the medical examiner or attending physician
- ▶ The Pronouncement of Death note will be completed in the clinical record

# Pronouncement

- ▶ In Maine, the nurse will notify the attending physician of the absence of vital signs and will document this in the vital signs section of the nurse visit note
- ▶ The time of communication of this information to the attending physician will be noted in the communication section of the nurse visit note
- ▶ IDT staff will provide post mortem care to the deceased

# Pronouncement

- ▶ The RN ensures that the funeral home has been called
- ▶ The appropriate completed pronouncement form will be prepared and left for the funeral home licensee in accordance with Massachusetts and New Hampshire laws
- ▶ In Maine, the nurse will inform the funeral home licensee that the attending physician has been notified

# Pronouncement

- ▶ Support is provided to the family/caregiver by IDT members as indicated



# Death of Suspicious Nature

- ▶ If the circumstances surrounding the death are suspicious or potentially due to another cause (i.e. – a fall), the RN will not pronounce the patient dead
- ▶ The RN will immediately notify his/her supervisor or administrator on-call of the event
- ▶ The supervisor/administrator on-call will direct the RN to call 911 to report a suspicious death, and to notify the attending physician of the situation
- ▶ An agency incident report will also be completed