



# Guidelines for **NPs** Completing Medical Certificate of Death & Medical Certificate of Stillbirth

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## **Introduction**

Saskatchewan Nurse Practitioners (NP)s must be familiar with the provincial legislation and best practice standards that are relevant to NPs completing Medical Certificate of Death (MCOD) and Medical Certificate of Stillbirth (MCOS). This guideline is to support NPs licensed with the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association (SRNA) in acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to accurately complete MCOB and MCOS.

## **Legislation**

The Government of Saskatchewan amended vital statistics legislation effective January 1, 2016, giving NPs the legal authority to sign the MCOB and MCOS. Physicians, coroners and NPs share responsibility for proper completion of MCOB and MCOS.

NPs registered with the SRNA are authorized to complete a MCOB and MCOS unless the death needs to be reported to a Coroner. NPs need to be familiar with the provincial legislation that will guide their clinical decisions including the current;

- *The Vital Statistics Regulations;*
- *The Vital Statistics Act;*
- *The Coroners Regulations;* and
- *The Coroners Act.*

## **Education**

It is expected that NPs obtain the new competencies to properly complete MCOB and MCOS.

NPs completing MCOB and MCOS need to know the following;

- Importance of the MCOB and MCOS.
- Correct way to complete the MCOB and MCOS.
- Provincial legislation pertinent to MCOB and MCOS.
- Legal aspects of signing MCOB and MCOS.
- Roles and responsibilities of a coroner.
- When to consult with a coroner.
- Determining the cause of death/stillbirth.

## Roles and Responsibilities for NPs When Completing MCOD and MCOS

- It is the responsibility of the NP to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and abilities to sign MCOD and MCOS.
- NPs need to complete the MCOD and MCOS according to eHealth guidelines and in accordance with the current *The Vital Statistics Act* and *The Vital Statistics Regulations*.
- **NPs cannot delegate authority to another health care provider to sign the MCOD or MCOS.**
- In general, the NP or physician most familiar with the medical history of the deceased should complete the MCOD/MCOS in those cases where the person has died from natural disease and where the death is not sudden, unexpected or unnatural.
- NPs should complete the MCOD or MCOS within 48 hours of the death/stillbirth to improve processes with funeral arrangements.
- NPs covering for other NPs or physicians are expected to complete MCOD and MCOS. This may include chart reviews of the deceased or the mother/fetus.
- The NP will need to apply knowledge as well as clinical reasoning and professional judgment when determining if the cause of death or the cause of stillbirth is reasonable based on the medical history of the deceased/stillborn and the circumstances of the death/stillbirth.
- NPs should consult with a collaborating physician (family physician or the specialist) if they require support in determining the cause of death/stillbirth or events leading up to the death/stillbirth.
- NPs, physicians and coroners cannot legally keep, make copies or disclose copies of the completed MCOD/MCOS to families or third party agencies.
- If an NP is unsure whether the death/stillbirth requires a coroner, the NP should consult with the coroner. Consulting the coroner does not automatically make the death/stillbirth a coroner's case.
- **Currently, deaths associated with medical assistance in dying must be reported to a Coroner who is required to complete the MCOD.**

## Educational Session

Webinar session provided in partnership with the Office of the Chief Coroner, eHealth, Canadian Nurses Protective Society, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan, and the SRNA has been recorded and available on the following web site;

<https://youtu.be/Nbu1meK-jYI>

## Resources

All Government of Saskatchewan documents are available on Queen's Printer at the following web site <http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/>

British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency. (2014). *Handbook for physicians, nurse practitioners, and coroners. Medical certification of death and stillbirth*. Retrieved from <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/vsa051.pdf>

Canadian Nurses Protective Society. (2016) *Guidance for NPs preparing medical certificates of death and stillbirth in Saskatchewan*. Retrieved from <http://cnps.ca/srnaguidance>

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan. (2016). *Policy: Physician obligations regarding medical certification of death*. Retrieved from [http://www.cps.sk.ca/imis/CPSS/Legislation\\_ByLaws\\_Policies\\_and\\_Guidelines/Policies\\_page.aspx?Legislation\\_PoliciesCCO=1](http://www.cps.sk.ca/imis/CPSS/Legislation_ByLaws_Policies_and_Guidelines/Policies_page.aspx?Legislation_PoliciesCCO=1)

Government of Saskatchewan, Vital Statistics, eHealth Saskatchewan. (2016). *Guidelines for completing the medical certificate of death and medical certificate of stillbirth*. Regina, SK: Author.

Government of Saskatchewan. Office of the Chief Coroner. (2016). *Role of the coroner. Reportable deaths*. Regina, SK: Author.

Government of Saskatchewan. (2010). *The Vital Statistics Regulations*. Regina, SK: Author.

Government of Saskatchewan. (2009). *The Vital Statistics Act*. Regina, SK: Author.

Government of Saskatchewan. (2000). *The Coroners Regulations*. Regina, SK: Author.

Government of Saskatchewan. (1999). *The Coroners Act*. Regina, SK: Author.

Office of the Registrar General. (2010). *Handbook on medical certification of death. Prepared for registered nurses (extended class)*. Retrieved from <http://www.publications.serviceontario.ca/ecomlinks/016600.pdf>