

Table 2: Selected Characteristics of Deaths Requiring Autopsy by State

Table Key: D=discretionary/R=required

Developed by Lisa Caucci of Public Health Law Program and Margaret Warner of National Center for Health Statistics. Analysis was performed in February–May 2013 on laws current as of January 31, 2013. Analysis is based solely on statutory and regulatory language and does not examine application or implementation of the referenced laws. Published January 2015 on the Public Health Law Program's Coroner/Medical Examiner Laws website: <http://www.cdc.gov/phlp/publications/coroner/>. CDC and the Public Health Law Program are not responsible for and cannot verify changes made to Excel files after they are downloaded from CDC's website. For the most current information, please visit the Public Health Law Program's website: <http://www.cdc.gov/phlp>.



Selected characteristic of deaths requiring autopsy	No. states	AL	AK	AZ	AR	CA	CO	CT	DE	DC	FL	GA	HI	ID	IL	IN	IA	KS	KY	LA	ME	
None specified	2				X																	
Coroner/Medical Examiner Discretion																						
If necessary in the opinion of/believed to be in public interest by	32		D	D					R	R	D	D		D		R	D	R		D		R
To determine cause of death when death may be by unlawful means	8	D																			R	
Falls into enumerated investigation categories & necessary in opinion of	7					D		D						R						D		
Necessary to determine/related to public health threat	6																D					
To obtain evidence for forensic examination	1										D											
Intent/Manner of Death																						
Homicide	7																R					
Suicide	7										R ¹						D					
Violence	5																					
Accident/casualty	3										R ¹											
Accident due to negligence of other	1																					
Criminal abortion	1																					
Criminal violence	1										R											
Circumstances																						
Requested by police or DA/ordered by court	20			R			R	R	R	R						R		R		R		
Suspicious/unusual/unnatural	6														R							
Suddenly when in apparent good health	2																					
Unidentified bodies	1																R					
Cause of Death																						
Unknown/unexplained causes	4														R							
Poisons/drugs/toxic agents	3										R ¹						R					
Work or farm related	3																R					
Drug use/abuse/overdose	2																D					
Fire/explosion	2																D					
Drowning	1																R					
In Custody of Others																						
Jail/police custody	3														R							
Jail/police custody, violence suspected	2										R											
Jail/police custody, unrelated to natural disease	2																R					
Infants/Children																						
Child death appears natural and occurs suddenly when in good health (under this age)	10										R	R ⁷ ²				R ³	D18					
Sudden Infant Death Syndrome suspected (under this age)	8					D					R ¹						R ²					
Child, suspicious/unexplained circumstance or unknown cause	4														R	D18		R				
Sudden unexplained infant death (under this age)	4			R											R ²						R ¹	
Children, generally or w/o known illness or under care (under this age)	3																R ²					R ³
Child abuse suspected	2																					
Number of characteristics	n/a	1	1	3	0	2	1	2	2	2	9	2	1	1	5	4	14	3	1	4	2	

Selected characteristic of deaths requiring autopsy	No. states	MD	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	MT	NE	NV	NH	NJ	NM	NY	NC	ND	OH	OK	OR
None specified	2									x									
Coroner/Medical Examiner Discretion																			
If necessary in the opinion of/believed to be in public interest by	32		D	D		R	D/R ³	D			R			R	R	D	R	R	
To determine cause of death when death may be by unlawful means	8												R				R ⁶		
Falls into enumerated investigation categories & necessary in opinion of	7	R			D														D
Necessary to determine/related to public health threat	6											R					R ⁶		
To obtain evidence for forensic examination	1																		
Intent/Manner of Death																			
Homicide	7											R					R ⁶		
Suicide	7											D							
Violence	5											D							
Accident/casualty	3											D							
Accident due to negligence of other	1																		
Criminal abortion	1																		
Criminal violence	1																		
Circumstances																			
Requested by police or DA/ordered by court	20							R			R	R	D		R	R			
Suspicious/unusual/unnatural	6											R							
Suddenly when in apparent good health	2																		
Unidentified bodies	1																		
Cause of Death																			
Unknown/unexplained causes	4												R						
Poisons/drugs/toxic agents	3																		
Work or farm related	3											D							
Drug use/abuse/overdose	2																		
Fire/explosion	2																		
Drowning	1																		
In Custody of Others																			
Jail/police custody	3								D					R					
Jail/police custody, violence suspected	2																		
Jail/police custody, unrelated to natural disease	2											R							
Infants/Children																			
Child death appears natural and occurs suddenly when in good health (under this age)	10						R1		D19 ⁴								R2		
Sudden Infant Death Syndrome suspected (under this age)	8											R				R ⁵			
Child, suspicious/unexplained circumstance or unknown cause	4																		
Sudden unexplained infant death (under this age)	4																		
Children, generally or w/o known illness or under care (under this age)	3						D18												
Child abuse suspected	2											R							
Number of characteristics	n/a	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	2	11	3	2	2	3	5	1	1

Selected characteristic of deaths requiring autopsy	No. states	PA	RI	SC	SD	TN	TX	UT	VT	VA	WA	WV	WI	WY
None specified	2													
Coroner/Medical Examiner Discretion														
If necessary in the opinion of/believed to be in public interest by	32	R		D	D		R	R	D	R		R		D
To determine cause of death when death may be by unlawful means	8				D			R ⁷			D			D ⁸
Falls into enumerated investigation categories & necessary in opinion of	7													
Necessary to determine/related to public health threat	6		D			D		R						
To obtain evidence for forensic examination	1													
Intent/Manner of Death														
Homicide	7		D			D					D		D	
Suicide	7		D			D					D		D	
Violence	5	D				D					D			D ⁸
Accident/casualty	3		D											
Accident due to negligence of other	1		D											
Criminal abortion	1		D											
Criminal violence	1													
Circumstances														
Requested by police or DA/ordered by court	20					R	R	R	R	R		R		
Suspicious/unusual/unnatural	6	D				D					D		D	
Suddenly when in apparent good health	2	D				D								
Unidentified bodies	1													
Cause of Death														
Unknown/unexplained causes	4												D	D ⁸
Poisons/drugs/toxic agents	3		D											
Work or farm related	3		D											
Drug use/abuse/overdose	2		D											
Fire/explosion	2												D	
Drowning	1													
In Custody of Others														
Jail/police custody	3													
Jail/police custody, violence suspected	2												R	
Jail/police custody, unrelated to natural disease	2													
Infants/Children														
Child death appears natural and occurs suddenly when in good health (under this age)	10			R		D	R6							
Sudden Infant Death Syndrome suspected (under this age)	8			R						R1.5			R2	
Child, suspicious/unexplained circumstance or unknown cause	4			R										
Sudden unexplained infant death (under this age)	4					D								
Children, generally or w/o known illness or under care (under this age)	3													
Child abuse suspected	2						R6							
Number of characteristics	n/a	4	9	4	2	9	4	4	2	3	5	2	7	4