

Pennsylvania Law requires the Coroner to investigate many types of deaths in their County for the purpose of determining the cause and manner of death and whether or not the death may have resulted from a criminal action or criminal neglect by someone other than the decedent.

In cases where the Coroner assumes jurisdiction after receiving a report of the death, investigation may include any or all of the following: a death scene response, bringing the decedent in for autopsy, toxicology, or other testing, interviews, and review of medical records.

#### **Next Steps for the Next of Kin:**

As soon as possible identify a funeral home of your choosing and immediately notify our office at (610) 344-6165.

Contact the funeral home and inform them that the deceased is being transported by the Coroner's Office.

The funeral home will then contact the Coroner's Office and make arrangements to have your loved one taken into their care.

**Chester County Coroner's Office**  
601 Westtown Road, Suite 090  
West Chester, PA 19382

**Office Hours:**  
Monday-Friday  
8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

**Phone: (610) 344-6165**  
**Fax: (610) 344-6018**  
**coroneroffice@chesco.org**

#### **CORONER**

**Christina VandePol, M.D.**

#### **Chief Deputy Coroner**

**Sophia Garcia-Jackson, M.S., D-ABMDI**

#### **Mission Statement**

*The Chester County Coroner's Office is an independent agency serving the citizens and honoring the deceased of the county by investigating the facts and circumstances concerning jurisdictional deaths which have occurred within Chester County. We determine the cause and manner of death, the identity of the decedent, and provide notification to the legal next of kin, while exhibiting the highest degree of compassion, professionalism, and integrity.*



## **SURVIVOR'S GUIDE**



The Chester County Coroner's Office extends its deepest sympathy during this difficult time. The information provided in this brochure is intended to assist survivors with decision making and helpful solutions during this time of loss.

***Coroner Investigator's Name:***

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## Death Certificates

Once the determination is made regarding the cause and manner of death, a death certificate is generated and provided to the responsible funeral home. The original certificate is filed with the Pennsylvania Division of Vital Records by the Funeral Director. Certified copies of this certificate can be obtained from the Funeral Director or the Division of Vital Records.

Pennsylvania Department of Health  
Division of Vital Records  
Forum Place  
101 South Mercer St.  
New Castle, PA 16101  
(724) 656-3100  
[www.vitalchek.com](http://www.vitalchek.com)

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## Cleaning Services

The following companies specialize in biohazard cleanup. The Chester County Coroner's Office does NOT endorse or recommend any particular company.

Aftermath, Inc.	800-366-9923
ALPHA BioMed	888-656-6228
Bio Tec	888-246-9111
Crime Scene Clean Up	800-295-5460
D.A.S.H.	888-972-0911
Emergiclean	215-742-4221
Radical Restoration	610-775-6535
ServiceMASTER Clean	410-392-4900

## Frequently Asked Questions

### When will I know the cause of death?

*The cause and manner of death information can be provided to next of kin when the Coroner completes the death certificate after the investigation is complete and all reports are final.*

### What does a "pending" case mean?

*Pending means the cause and manner of death have not been finalized and investigation is ongoing. A death certificate with "pending" as cause of death allows funeral arrangements to move forward. Final death certificates are completed and sent to the funeral home after investigation is complete, usually within 6 weeks.*

### How and when can personal property/ possessions be claimed?

*Generally, items to be released can be retrieved from the Coroner's Office Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. Please make contact with the Coroner's office at 610-344-6165 for more information.*

### How can I get a copy of an autopsy or toxicology report?

*Next of kin can complete a request form available on our website ([chesco.org/Coroner](http://chesco.org/Coroner)), which provides further information. There is a charge for certified reports.*

### Can I see my loved one at the morgue?

*Arrangements for viewing at the morgue cannot be granted. The coroner's office will work as quickly as possible to have your loved one taken into the care of the Funeral Home.*

### Who is considered the next of kin?

*The legal next of kin is the closest living relative in the following order; spouse (unless divorced), adult child, parent, adult brother or sister, adult grandchild.*

## Information, support and guidance are available.

**Center for Loss and Bereavement**  
(610) 222-4110

**Chester County Mental Health  
Crisis Intervention Hotline**  
(610) 280-3270

**Compassionate Friends**  
Provides support for the loss of an infant or child.  
(484) 919-0820  
<https://www.compassionatefriends.org>

**Crime Victims Center of Chester County**  
(610) 692-1926

**Highmark Caring Place**  
Provides services for children dealing with death & loss.  
(866) 613-4673

**Family Lives On**  
Provides services for children and teens who have lost a parent.  
(610) 458-1690

**"If Love were only Enough"**  
Grief support to parents who have lost a child due to a drug overdose.  
Annalie Korelin 610-952-2992

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

**PA SIDS Alliance**  
Provides services for the loss of an infant with SIDS  
(888) 721-2742