SESLHD PROCEDURE COVER SHEET



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KEY TERMS	Assessment, verify, Palliative Care Community Nurse, death, extinction of life.
SUMMARY	The purpose of the procedure is to provide clinical guidance to ensure that the assessment and documentation to verify death in the palliative care setting complies with legal and legislative framework.

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS DOCUMENT IS MANDATORY

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

This document is a procedural guide to NSW Ministry of Health PD2020 011 Verification of Death and Medical Certificate of Cause of Death The purpose of this policy is to outline the processes for the assessment and documentation to verify death (previously referred to as extinction of life) by qualified community palliative care (CPC) registered nurses employed by NSW Health. These nurses will be able to verify and document that death has occurred for patients who have been receiving palliative care by a NSW public health service or facility and where death is expected at home.

2. BACKGROUND

This procedure comes into place when a medical practitioner is unavailable to attend and issue a death certificate and when the death of the client was expected as a result of their life limiting condition.

The circumstances where a medical practitioner **must** assess life extinct include but are not limited to, situations where:

- The cause of death is unclear
- There is uncertainty as to whether life is extinct
- Medical tests need to be undertaken to pronounce life extinct (eg, brain death).

(Refer to NSW Ministry of Health Policy Directive PD2010_054 - Coroners Cases and the Coroners Act 2009)

This policy is in accordance with the <u>NSW Ministry of Health PD2020_011 Verification of</u> Death and Medical Certificate of Cause of Death

2.1 Public health organisations is defined in Section 7 of the Health Services Act 1997 as:

- A local health district and specialty health network
- A statutory health corporation
- An affiliated health organisation in respect of its recognised establishments and recognised services.

2.2 Legal and legislative framework

NSW legislation relevant to this policy directive:

- Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995
- Coroners Act 2009
- Human Tissue Act 1983
- Health Services Act 1997.

2.3 Policy framework

NSW Health policy documents relevant to this policy directive:

- NSW Ministry of Health Policy Directive PD2010 054 Coroners Cases and the Coroners Act 2009)
- NSW Ministry of Health PD2020 012 Deceased Organ and Tissue Donation -



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Consent and Other Procedural

• NSW Ministry of Health Policy Directive PD2011_052 - Conduct of Anatomical Examinations and Anatomy Licensing in NSW.

NSW Health State Forms relevant to this policy directive:

- Attending Practitioners Cremation Certificate (Public Health Regulation, 2012, Clause 81)
- Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (SMR010.509)
- IB2010 058 Coronial Checklist (SMR010.513)
- Verification of Death (SMR010.530)
- Death Certification Arrangements for Expected Home Death (SMR010.531).

3. VERIFICATION OF DEATH

3.1. CPC registered nurses will:

- CPC nurses who may be required to document and perform assessment of death must use the state wide Verification of Death form SMR010530 (see Appendix 2)
- Document the correct procedure in the patient's medical record
- Place a copy of the SMR010530 into the patient's medical record
- Complete the HETI online module: Verification of Death. Course code 98564783.

3.2. Line Managers/ District Managers/ Service Managers will:

- Ensure education and training is provided to CPC registered nurses who may be required to perform Verification of Death assessment to ensure that they have the knowledge (including legislation requirements regarding notification of cause of death) and clinical assessment skills to perform the extinction of life procedure
- Ensure all CPC registered nurses complete the HETI online module: Verification of Death. Course code 98564783
- Ensure that auditing practices are routinely undertaken in line with <u>SESLHDGL/071 Death Screening and Review</u>.

4. CLINICAL PROCEDURE FOR VERIFYING DEATH

4.1. The Expected Death

Prior to the death of a palliative care client in the home the CPC registered nurse will, where ever possible, have outlined the procedure to the family/carer and informed a Medical Practitioner of the patient's deteriorating condition.

Patients who are planning a home death will have a plan documented in the eMR and on the afterhours At Risk List.

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The following is to be undertaken when:

A CPC registered nurse attends a home visit at the request of the carer/family member following the expected death of a palliative care client and a Medical Practitioner is not available to certify death. The Palliative Care Consultant or registrar and the After Hours Nurse Manager should be notified.

This is done by demonstrating all of the following:

- No palpable carotid pulse, and
- No heart sounds heard for three minutes, and
- No breath sounds heard for three minutes, and
- Fixed and dilated pupils, and
- No response to centralised stimulus, and
- No motor (withdrawal) response or facial grimace in response to painful stimulus.

5. DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS BY THE COMMUNITY PALLIATIVE CARE NURSE WHEN A PATIENT DIES AT HOME

Please see the flow chart at Appendix 1 for a summary of the process.

5.1. Medical certification following Verification of Death

- A medical practitioner must complete the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death within 48 hours of death
- The contact details of the medical practitioner who will complete the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death should be included in the Verification of Death form to ensure this occurs
- For patients cared for at home where death is anticipated (eg patients known to NSW Health palliative care and affiliated or contracted palliative care services or hospital in the home patients with a resuscitation plan in place). It is recommended that there is agreement in advance on who will complete the medical certification of death
- In such cases, the patient's general practitioner may agree to this responsibility.

6. AUDIT

Ensure that auditing practices are routinely undertaken in line with <u>SESLHDGL/071 – Death Screening and Review</u>.

7. REFERENCES

- Academy of Medical Royal Colleges 2008, A Code of Practice for the Diagnosis and confirmation of Death, PPG Design and Print Ltd
- Government of Western Australia, Department of Health 2014. Assessment of the Extinction of Life and the Certification of Death.
- SESLHDGL/071 Death Screening and Review



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- Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society. The ANZICS Statement on Death and Organ Donation (3rd Edition). Melbourne: ANZICS, 2008.
- Published by the Emergency Care Institute, Agency for Clinical Innovation (website accessed 2014)
- NSW Ministry of Health Policy Directive PD2010 054 Coroners Cases and the Coroners Act 2009
- NSW Ministry of Health PD2020_011 Verification of Death and Medical Certificate of Cause of Death
- NSW Ministry of Health Policy Directive PD2011_052 Conduct of Anatomical Examinations and Anatomy Licensing in NSW.

8. REVISION AND APPROVAL HISTORY

Date	Revision No.	Author and Approval
	0	Kim Rigg
	1	Palliative Care Working Party and SESLHD Directors of Palliative Care
February 2016	1	Draft for Comment
March 2016	2	Revisions made by Kim Rigg- deleted obsolete Area Policy Directive PD094 Death – Reports to Coroner.
		Included information in regard to HETI online module Verification of Death.
April 2016	2	Approved C&QC meeting – April 2016
August 2019	3	Minor review. Changes made in regards to eMR documentation. Approved by Executive Sponsor. Formatted and links updated by Executive Services prior to publishing.
May 2020	4	Minor review endorsed by Executive Sponsor.
		Changes include updating of Ministry of Health policies and form to reflect; no heart sounds heard for three minutes (previously two minutes); no breath sounds heard for three minutes (previously two minutes).
		Processed by Executive Services prior to publishing.

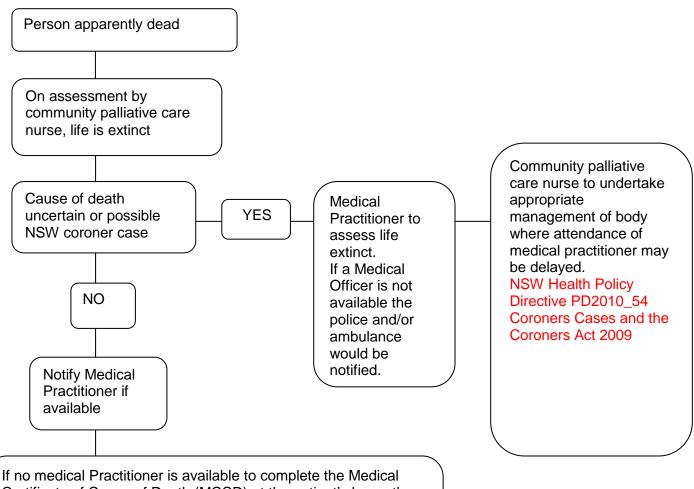
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APPENDIX 1 - Roles and Responsibilities for documentation when a patient dies at home.



If no medical Practitioner is available to complete the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) at the patient's home the community palliative care nurse will perform a full clinical examination to life extinct as per NSW Ministry of Health
PD2020_011 Verification of Death and Medical Certificate of Cause of Death

Community palliative care nurse to document the details of clinical assessment- Appendix 2

Original to be given to the family to give to the funeral director. Copy to be placed in medical record

Within 48 hours Medical Practitioner must complete the medical certificate of cause of death to provide cause of death to Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Alternatively provide the MCCD to the funeral director.

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Appendix 2

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