WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §61-12-8

§61-12-8. Certain deaths to be reported to medical examiners; failure to report deaths; investigations and reports; authority of medical examiners to administer oaths, etc., fees.

(a) When any person dies in this state from violence, or by apparent suicide, or suddenly when in apparent good health, or when unattended by a physician, or when an inmate of a public institution, or from some disease which might constitute a threat to public health, or in any suspicious, unusual or unnatural manner, the chief medical examiner, or his or her designee or the county medical examiner, or the coroner of the county in which death occurs shall be immediately notified by the physician in attendance, or if no physician is in attendance, by any law-enforcement officer having knowledge of the death, or by the funeral director, or by any other person present or having knowledge. Any physician or law-enforcement officer, funeral director or embalmer who willfully fails to comply with this notification requirement is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be fined not less than $100 nor more than $500. Upon notice of a death under this section, the chief medical examiner, or his or her designee or the county medical examiner, shall take charge of the body and any objects or articles which, in his or her opinion, may be useful in establishing the cause or manner of death, and deliver them to the law-enforcement agency having jurisdiction in the case. In the course of an investigation of a death required to be reported by this section, the chief medical examiner shall, upon written request to any law-enforcement agency or any state or regional correctional facility, be provided with all records of the investigation of decedent's death and all records of decedent's incarceration. Where a decedent received therapeutic, corrective or medical treatment prior to death, the chief medical examiner may request in writing that any person or other entity which rendered the treatment promptly provide all records within its possession or control pertaining to the decedent and the treatment rendered: Provided, That nothing contained in this section may be construed as precluding the chief medical examiner from directly inspecting or obtaining investigation records, incarceration records or medical records related to the case. Where records of a decedent become part of the chief medical examiner's file, they are not subject to subpoena or a request for production directed to the chief medical examiner.

(b) A county medical examiner, or his or her assistant, shall make inquiries regarding the cause and manner of death, reduce his or her findings to writing, and promptly make a full report thereof to the chief medical examiner on forms prescribed by the chief medical examiner, retaining one copy of the report for his or her own office records and providing one copy to the prosecuting attorney of the county in which the death occurred.

(c) A county medical examiner or assistant medical examiner shall receive a fee for each investigation performed under the provisions of this article, including the making of required reports, which fee shall be determined by the chief medical examiner and paid out of funds

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appropriated therefor.

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