

When a loved one dies

The first thing you need to do is take care of yourself. We will share a great deal of information with you, and you will need to make several decisions. Here are a few suggestions to help guide you and your loved ones through this process:

- Involve your family, friends, and clergy for support and comfort. They will assist you in making sense of this tragic and sometimes sudden news. Call us—we can point you to resources to guide you through this difficult time.
- Select a funeral home to help you make funeral arrangements and coordinate final disposition of your loved one's remains. If you don't know where to turn, you can call a variety of funeral homes, ask questions, and obtain pricing. Any funeral home can assist with cremation.
- Once you have chosen a funeral home, the funeral director will make arrangements to pick up and transport your loved one's remains back to the funeral home following the autopsy.
- Keep track of all business cards given to you and start a file or folder to correlate all paperwork and information that will be shared with you as a result of your loved one's death.
- Finally—remember to check in on yourself. Stress can come into one's life quickly and unexpectedly. Don't be afraid to use resources available to you in your community.

We hope the information in this brochure is helpful for you and your family. If you would like more information or to see our FAQ you can go to our website

<https://co.jefferson.ny.us/departments/PublicHealth/medical-examiner-office>

**Or contact us at: 315-786-3755.
Our normal business hours are
8:00am – 4:30pm, M-F.**

***Jefferson County
Medical Examiner's Office***



Jefferson County Medical Examiner's Office

Information for families

The death of a loved one can cause tremendous stress and sorrow.

We hope this brochure will assist you during the grieving process and help answer questions about the autopsy process and the role of the Medical Examiner.

531 Meade Street
Watertown, NY 13601
315-786-3755



The role of the Medical Examiner

Medical Examiners are licensed physicians, usually Forensic Pathologists who certify the cause and manner of death, based on his/her expert opinion following an investigation and medical examination. This examination may include an autopsy, toxicology and other laboratory testing.

The mission of the Jefferson County Medical Examiner's Office is to investigate deaths that fall under the New York State County Law, Article 17A, Section 670. Our goal is to provide answers for those affected by sudden and traumatic loss, and help improve the public health, safety and wellbeing of our residents.

The Autopsy

The Medical Examiner will determine to what extent an autopsy or external examination is necessary to determine cause and manner of death. A decision will be made after all medical records and investigative reports have been reviewed.

If an autopsy or external examination of the body (decedent) is not required, then the decedent will be released directly to the funeral home of your choice. If you need additional time to select a funeral home, your loved one will be transported by the Medical Examiner Transporter to Samaritan Medical Center until you have made a selection.

Is there a fee for an autopsy/external examination?

No. Autopsies authorized by the Medical Examiner's Office are conducted at Jefferson County's expense. There are no fees for transports until the decedent is released from the Medical Examiner's Office.

How long will it take before my loved one is released from the Medical Examiner?

Depending on the time of day the decedent is received at the Medical Examiner's Office, they may be released the same day, or the next day. In rare cases in deaths that require further investigation, the decedent may be held for additional time. It is our goal to release all decedents within 24 hours of arrival.

Can there be an open casket after autopsy?

An autopsy *does not* prohibit viewing. *However*, you should discuss this with your funeral director as the circumstances surrounding the death must be taken into consideration.

Where can I obtain a Death Certificate? Who can request one?

There are multiple ways to obtain a death certificate:

- (1) Your funeral director may be able to obtain a copy for you.
- (2) You may obtain a copy of the death certificate from the Registrar's Office in the town or village where the death occurred.
- (3) You may also obtain a copy of the death certificate from New York State Vital Statistics at https://www.health.ny.gov/vital_records/death.htm

Note: The Jefferson County Medical Examiner's Office does not issue death certificates.