

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER
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3/19/20

The vast majority of COVID-19 deaths occur in hospitals. As the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has statutory jurisdiction over all deaths related to a disease which might constitute a threat to public health, **all suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases should be reported to the OCME.** The vast majority of these decedents, however, will not be brought to the OCME. As these are natural deaths, death certification should be completed by the treating physician. These deaths may be certified as: **Complications of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Respiratory Infection.** Contributing conditions (e.g., pulmonary emphysema, obesity, etc.) may be listed in Part 2 of the death certificate.

Forensic and Non-Hospital Deaths and COVID-19:

If a COVID-19 death would have otherwise been brought to the OCME for another forensic-related reason (e.g., a homicide), the decedent will be brought to the OCME for examination. For suspected COVID-19 deaths in the community that did not have testing and become OCME cases, the OCME may collect swab samples at the funeral home.

Scene and Postmortem Body Exposure:

COVID-19 is a new disease and we are still learning how it spreads. The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought mainly to spread from close contact (i.e., within about 6 feet) with a person who is currently sick with COVID-19. The virus likely spreads primarily through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory infections spread. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. **This type of spread is not a concern after death.**

The virus may survive many hours and even days on surfaces and objects. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. **Gloves and hand washing are the most effective method to prevent this type of transmission.**