DEATH CERTIFICATES

What is a Death Certificate?
A death certificate is an official document issued by the government that serves as legal proof of death. The death certificate is crucial for settling the estate of the deceased. Public health officials also use death certificates for data on numerous statistics.

Where Do I Get Death Certificates?
You can obtain certified copies of the death certificate through the funeral home that handled the final arrangements, Georgia's Vital Records Office, or through VitalChek, ww.vitalchek.com. The DeKalb County Medical Examiner's Office does not provide copies of the death certificate. Our role is to conduct a thorough investigation to determine manner and cause of death.

How Long Does it Take to Get a Death Certificate?
We understand how important it is for the family to receive the death certificates and make it a top priority to get it signed as quickly as possible. Georgia uses a program called GAVERS (Georgia Vital Events Registration System) to complete death certificates, which streamlines the process.
Generally, the death certificate process takes several weeks to complete. However, some cases require more investigation and additional testing, which can delay the process significantly. Additional testing includes histology, toxicology and reviewing medical records. Some toxicology testing can take several months to receive results.

How Much Do Death Certificates Cost?
The first certified copy of a Georgia death certificate costs $25. Any additional copy will be $5, per certified copy.

How Many Certified Copies Should I Get?
Most entities that require a death certificate will request a certified copy. We recommend securing 10 to 20 death certificates for the purpose of settling the estate and closing out your loved one's finances. In order to determine how many are needed, the deceased's assets must be considered.

What Will I Need a Death Certificate For?
- Insurance Policies
- Retirement Plans, 401Ks, Pensions
- Social Security & Medicaid
- Probate the Estate
- Title Transfers
- Military Benefits
- Closing & Accessing Bank Accounts
- Accessing Safety Deposit Boxes
- Stock Certificates & Bonds
- Money Market Accounts
- Credit Card Accounts
- Tax Returns
- Title Ownership of Property
- Close Accounts such as Utilities
- Cancel Memberships & Subscriptions
- Final Disposition in Other States & Countries

Death Certificate Process

1 Our Forensic Pathologist will conduct a postmortem exam. Depending on the case, additional testing my be required.

2 The funeral home will collect biographical information and enter it into GAVERS. They will need to designate our office as the signing authority.

3 When all results are in and the death has been thoroughly investigated, the death certificate will be signed by the medical examiner with manner and cause of death.

4 The funeral home will submit the signed document to the Vital Records office for approval. Once the county has approved, the certified copies can be printed.

DEKALB COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE