

OSAC is Back! (OSAC = Organization of Scientific Area Committees)

NAME OSAC UPDATE #5: OSAC 2023-N-0022

Best Practice Recommendations for Communicating with next of Kin During Medicolegal Death Investigations

This Best Practice Recommendation was developed by the OSAC subcommittee Medicolegal Death Investigation. While a Standard defines required practices, this document contains recommendations only. This OSAC document should be useful to NAME members as a training document for investigators, or as a reference when writing policies. The document has 3 useful appendices which provide resources for investigators (see below).

This is a brief summary of OSAC 2023-N-0022, and as such may leave out or misinterpret important details. See link to full document (below). The AAFS has developed checklists to assist in implementation. (A link to the checklist for this document included below.)

SCOPE: “This document specifies recommendations for communicating with next of kin during a medicolegal death investigation.”

Six specific recommendations listed in the document and copied verbatim below. In the document, each recommendation is followed by an explanatory paragraph:

3.1: Provide training to medicolegal death investigation professionals who interact with next of kin

3.2: Provide information on the medicolegal death investigation process to next of kin, with resources in multiple formats

3.3: Recognize and accommodate cultural, religious, and other beliefs as practical

3.4: Provide resources for grief and final disposition assistance

3.5: Ensure that next of kin understand their right to access and obtain medicolegal death investigation report(s)

3.6: Ensure that next of kin inquiries are answered in a timely manner

Appendix A: Has links to communication resources

Appendix B: A list of 20 questions frequently asked by families of decedents, with the suggestion that investigators/offices be prepared to answer them respectfully and honestly. This would also be a good training tool for investigators. The document further recommends that these questions could be answered in written material provided to families, or on office websites.

Appendix C: A listing of national advocacy/family support programs and resources with links and website addresses. Valuable as a resource as these programs are listed together in one place.

Full Document: <https://www.nist.gov/document/osac-2023-n-0022-best-practice-recommendation-communicating-next-kin-during-medicolegal>

AAFS Checklist:

https://www.aafs.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/MDI_OSAC%202023-N-0022_Checklist%20V1.xlsx