

ALASKA PIONEER HOME		P&P No: 06.05
Title: Death of a Resident		Approval: D. COTE
Key Words: Determination, Pronouncement, Certificate, Registered Nurse, Property		
Team: Nursing, Administration	Effective Date: 8/1/12	Page: 1 of 5

PURPOSE

To define the procedure for determining and pronouncing the death of an Alaska Pioneer Home (AKPH) resident.

POLICY

Determination and pronouncement of the death of an AKPH resident is performed in compliance with Alaska laws and regulations.

AKPH direct care staff is required to be certified every two years in CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), a conscious choking maneuver, and first aid.

DEFINITIONS

Determination of death is the observation and assessment that a person is dead. Assessment includes an absence of human responses, spontaneous breathing, *and* heart beat.

Pronouncement of death is to say that a person is dead after an assessment has been made.

Certificate of death identifies the person, date of death, cause of death, and is signed by the attending physician within 24 hours.

PROCEDURE

I. Death of a Pioneer Home Resident

- A. Physician pronounces death
 1. Attending physician may pronounce death in person or by telephone.
 2. A registered nurse determines that death has occurred by listening with a stethoscope for:
 - a. Absence of response,
 - b. Absence of breath sounds, *and*
 - c. Absence of apical pulse.
 3. Nurse notes the time and date that death occurred.
 4. Nurse places a call to the physician as soon as possible.

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- a. Notifies physician that death is apparent based upon lack of response, breath sounds and apical pulse.
 - b. States or estimates time of death.
 5. Physician pronounces death.
 6. Physician permits the release of the body to the funeral home.
 7. Nurse informs the following people that death has occurred:
 - a. Resident's representative, and
 - b. Home administrator.
 8. Nurse follows the representative's wishes regarding visitation in the Home prior to body being released to the funeral home.
 9. Nurse notifies the funeral home about the resident's death.
- B. Registered nurse pronounces death
1. Attending physician may delegate the responsibility for determining and pronouncing a resident's death to registered nurses of the Home.
 - a. Registered nurse employed by the AKPH may make a determination or pronouncement of death due to the AKPH written policy and procedure which is compliant with Alaska law. (7AAC 74.070, Section 08.68.700).
 - b. This AKPH P&P No. 06.05 is in compliance with Alaska state law.
 2. Physician must document in the clinical progress notes that the resident's death is anticipated due to illness, infirmity, or disease.
 - a. Physician's note is valid for 120 days from the date it is documented.
 - b. Physician's order authorizes all the registered nurses employed at the Home to make the determination and pronouncement of the death.
 3. A registered nurse determines that death has occurred by lack of response and listening with a stethoscope for:
 - a. Absence of breath sounds, *and*
 - b. Absence of apical pulse.
 4. Nurse notes the time and date that death occurred.
 5. Nurse notifies physician that death has occurred as soon as possible.
 6. Nurse documents the clinical criteria for the determination and pronouncement of the resident's death in the resident's clinical record.
 7. Nurse signs the death certificate and provides the following information:
 - a. Name of the deceased resident,
 - b. Presence of a contagious disease, if applicable, and
 - c. Date and time of death.
 8. Nurse informs the following people that death has occurred:
 - a. Resident's representative, and
 - b. Home administrator.
 9. Nurse follows the representative's wishes regarding visitation in the Home prior to body being released to the funeral home.

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10. Nurse notifies the funeral home about the resident's death.
 11. Physician signs the death certificate within 24 hours after the pronouncement by the nurse.
 12. Funeral director often completes the death certificate and obtains the physician's signature.
- C. Funeral and burial arrangements
1. Family or representative of the deceased resident makes arrangements.
 2. The Pioneer Homes are not responsible for any funeral, burial, cremation, or similar costs for a resident.
- D. Unusual circumstances of death
1. Unattended death in a Pioneer Home:
 - a. Unanticipated.
 - b. Occurs when there is no previous diagnosis of terminal illness.
 - c. Reported to the state medical examiner's office and the police.
 2. Alaska law states that a person who is present for a death or has knowledge of a death with unusual circumstances must notify:
 - a. State police, and
 - b. State medical examiner office.
 - 1) Notify the medical examiner before the funeral home is contacted.
 - 2) Medical examiner decides when the body is released to the funeral home.
 - 3) Phone number for the Alaska medical examiner is 1-888-332-3273; in Anchorage is 334-2200.
 - c. Assisted Living Licensing (Mandatory Incident Notification Form)
 3. Unusual circumstances of death include:
 - a. Unknown or criminal means, during a crime, by suicide, accident, or poisoning.
 - b. Suspicious or unusual circumstances, as in the death of an apparently healthy person.
 - c. Unattended by a physician, or in a medical facility for less than 24 hours after admission.
 - d. Associated with a diagnostic or therapeutic procedure.
 - e. Due to a disease that is a threat to public health.
 - f. Due to a disease, injury, or toxic agent in the course of employment.
 - g. In a jail, corrections facility, or other place where persons are placed by the State or are in State supervision.
 - h. In a foster home.
 - i. In a mental institution or mental treatment facility.
 - j. While in State or government custody.

II. Property and Money of the Deceased Resident

- A. Upon the death of a resident, the resident's property is disposed of in accordance with court approved documents.
1. Release of property after a resident's death.
 - a. Designated Home staff (nurse or social worker) refers resident's representative to the court to obtain a form, the *Affidavit for release of property to temporary custodian*.
 - b. Affidavit is completed by the individual requesting the property.
 - c. Affidavit is notarized.
 - d. A copy of the affidavit is given to the Home and placed in the deceased resident's records.
 - e. Designated staff provides a form to the resident's representative, the *Inventory of Property Taken by Temporary Custodian*.
 - 1) Home staff may provide assistance with the property inventory.
 - f. Designated staff with the representative co-signs the completed form.
 - g. Designated staff gives a copy of the form to the resident's representative.
 - h. The original inventory form is placed in the deceased resident's records.
 2. Release of resident's funds after a resident's death.
 - a. Cash up to \$100 which is among the deceased resident's personal belongings may be included on the inventory sheet and released to a temporary property custodian by designated staff (nurse or social worker).
 - b. Cash in excess of \$100 is deposited in a Pioneer Home trust account for the resident.
 - c. Account balances are claimed by the executor of the resident's estate.
 - 1) Executor must first produce court documents that designate the person as the executor.
 3. Disagreements about temporary property custody
 - a. Home administrator may refuse to give out property and may refer the individuals to the court if:
 - 1) There is disagreement about which person is the temporary property custodian.
 - 2) There is concern that the person who claims property is not appropriate as a temporary property custodian.
 - b. Property is given to the indicated individual upon receipt of a court order.
 4. Resident without family or representative
 - a. Occasionally a resident has no family member or representative to assume responsibility for burial and property disbursement after death.
 - b. Property is disbursed to a temporary property custodian upon receipt of a court order.
 - c. The Home administrator contacts the probate court for further instruction.

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HISTORY OF REVISIONS

New: 1/1/12

Revised: 2/17/12; 7/20/12

Reviewed: 2/17/12

ATTACHMENTS

N-04 Death and Pronouncement

REFERENCES

7AAC 75.340, 7AAC 74.070, AS 08.68.395, AS 08.68.700, 7 AAC 10, AS 47.32