

Certifying Deaths Due to COVID-19: Documenting COVID-19 (Presumed or Confirmed) on Death Certificate

CAUSE OF DEATH (See instructions and examples)		Approximate interval: Onset to death
32. PART I. Enter the <u>chain of events</u> —diseases, injuries, or complications—that directly caused the death. DO NOT enter terminal events such as cardiac arrest, respiratory arrest, or ventricular fibrillation without showing the etiology. DO NOT ABBREVIATE. Enter only one cause on a line. Add additional lines if necessary. IMMEDIATE CAUSE (Final disease or condition resulting in death) → a. Acute respiratory acidosis Due to (or as a consequence of): b. COVID-19 Due to (or as a consequence of): c. _____ Due to (or as a consequence of): d. _____ Sequentially list conditions, if any, leading to the cause listed on line a. Enter the UNDERLYING CAUSE (disease or injury that initiated the events resulting in death) LAST		
PART II. Enter other significant conditions contributing to death but not resulting in the underlying cause given in PART I Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension		33. WAS AN AUTOPSY PERFORMED? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No 34. WERE AUTOPSY FINDINGS AVAILABLE TO COMPLETE THE CAUSE OF DEATH? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
35. DID TOBACCO USE CONTRIBUTE TO DEATH? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Probably <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	36. IF FEMALE: <input type="checkbox"/> Not pregnant within past year <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant at time of death <input type="checkbox"/> Not pregnant, but pregnant within 42 days of death <input type="checkbox"/> Not pregnant, but pregnant 43 days to 1 year before death <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown if pregnant within the past year	37. MANNER OF DEATH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural <input type="checkbox"/> Homicide <input type="checkbox"/> Accident <input type="checkbox"/> Pending Investigation <input type="checkbox"/> Suicide <input type="checkbox"/> Could not be determined

In this case, the acute respiratory acidosis was the immediate cause of death, so it was reported on line a. Acute respiratory acidosis was precipitated by the COVID-19 infection, which was reported below it on line b. in Part I. The COPD and hypertension were contributing causes but were not a part of the causal sequence in Part I, so those conditions were reported in Part II.¹

Part I

- **COVID-19 should not be listed as the primary Cause of Death (COD)**
 - If presumed or confirmed COVID+, that should be documented on death certificate as underlying (lines b, c, d)
 - If uncertain if patient was COVID-19+, provider can document “**probably or presumed**”
 - When results are pending but you suspect **COVID-19**, add as underlying cause as “**probable or likely**” **COVID-19**
 - Deaths with reported recent illness – fever cough, SOB, fatigue, anorexia, myalgia outside of healthcare system – should prompt presumptive COVID

Part II: Other Significant Conditions

- Other significant conditions contributing to death, but not resulting in the underlying cause given in Part I

Certifying Deaths Due to COVID-19

- If COVID-19 is determined to be a cause of death, it should be reported on the death certificate, likely as the underlying cause of death
 - Testing should be conducted, if possible
 - If a definitive diagnosis cannot be made, but it is suspected or likely, it can be reported as “probable” or “presumed”
- Generally, it is best to avoid abbreviations and acronyms, but COVID-19 is unambiguous, so it is OK to report it
- Pre-existing conditions that may increase susceptibility to infection or exacerbate the disease, such as COPD or asthma, should be reported in Part II

^{1,2,3} Vital Statistics Reporting Guide. Guidance for Certifying Deaths Due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Report No. 3 April 2020. Available from: [Guidance for Certifying Deaths Due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

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Other Examples

In this case, the immediate cause of death was ARDS, so it was reported on line a. as a consequence of pneumonia, which was reported on line b. The underlying cause of death (UCOD) was COVID-19 so it was reported on line c., the lowest line used in Part I. ²

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IMMEDIATE CAUSE (Final disease or condition resulting in death) →	a. Acute respiratory distress syndrome	Due to (or as a consequence of):	2 days
Sequentially list conditions, if any, leading to the cause listed on line a. Enter the UNDERLYING CAUSE (disease or injury that initiated the events resulting in death) LAST	b. Pneumonia	Due to (or as a consequence of):	10 days
	c. COVID-19	Due to (or as a consequence of):	10 days
	d.		
PART II. Enter other <u>significant conditions contributing to death</u> but not resulting in the underlying cause given in PART I			33. WAS AN AUTOPSY PERFORMED? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
			34. WERE AUTOPSY FINDINGS AVAILABLE TO COMPLETE THE CAUSE OF DEATH? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
35. DID TOBACCO USE CONTRIBUTE TO DEATH? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Probably <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	36. IF FEMALE: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not pregnant within past year <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant at time of death <input type="checkbox"/> Not pregnant, but pregnant within 42 days of death <input type="checkbox"/> Not pregnant, but pregnant 43 days to 1 year before death <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown if pregnant within the past year	37. MANNER OF DEATH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural <input type="checkbox"/> Homicide <input type="checkbox"/> Accident <input type="checkbox"/> Pending Investigation <input type="checkbox"/> Suicide <input type="checkbox"/> Could not be determined	

Although no testing was done, the coroner determined that the likely UCOD was COVID-19 given the patient's symptoms and exposure to an infected individual. Therefore, COVID-19 was reported on the lowest line used in Part I. Her ischemic stroke was considered a factor that contributed to her death but was not a part of the direct causal sequence in Part I, so it was reported in Part II. ³

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IMMEDIATE CAUSE (Final disease or condition resulting in death) →	a. Acute respiratory illness	Due to (or as a consequence of):	1 day
Sequentially list conditions, if any, leading to the cause listed on line a. Enter the UNDERLYING CAUSE (disease or injury that initiated the events resulting in death) LAST	b. Probable COVID-19	Due to (or as a consequence of):	5 days
	c.	Due to (or as a consequence of):	
	d.		
PART II. Enter other <u>significant conditions contributing to death</u> but not resulting in the underlying cause given in PART I			33. WAS AN AUTOPSY PERFORMED? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Ischemic stroke			34. WERE AUTOPSY FINDINGS AVAILABLE TO COMPLETE THE CAUSE OF DEATH? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
35. DID TOBACCO USE CONTRIBUTE TO DEATH? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Probably <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	36. IF FEMALE: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not pregnant within past year <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant at time of death <input type="checkbox"/> Not pregnant, but pregnant within 42 days of death <input type="checkbox"/> Not pregnant, but pregnant 43 days to 1 year before death <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown if pregnant within the past year	37. MANNER OF DEATH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural <input type="checkbox"/> Homicide <input type="checkbox"/> Accident <input type="checkbox"/> Pending Investigation <input type="checkbox"/> Suicide <input type="checkbox"/> Could not be determined	

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