

BILH Interim Post-mortem Care Protocol

This guideline supplements/alters the existing post-death care processes at individual BILH institutions in the setting of COVID-19 in the community.

Reporting deaths

- The state will be notified of deaths related to COVID-19 via the death certificate, and so separate reporting to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH) is not necessary.
- If a decedent is suspected of having COVID-19, but a nasopharyngeal swab for COVID-19 testing was not collected prior to death, please refer the case to the Medical Examiner.
- Do **not** offer an autopsy to **any** families at this time, even if the patient was not suspected of having COVID-19. BILH autopsy services are closed until further notice given the risk of infection to the Pathology staff. Pathology will re-evaluate as the situation evolves.
 - Contact the on-call Pathologist with any/all questions related to autopsies.

Supporting families

- Two family members are allowed to visit their decedent prior to transport to the morgue. Please see the each BILH institution's Interim End-of-Life Visitation Protocol for detailed guidance about how to manage such visits.
- Families should choose a funeral home or cremation society as soon as possible.
- If families have not yet chosen a funeral home or cremation society, consult Social Work or Spiritual Care to assist them. This will help prevent morgue overcrowding.

Post-death body management

- For decedents not suspected of COVID-19, follow existing policy (refer to institutional policy, if exists).
- For any decedent with suspected or confirmed COVID-19:
 - Nursing staff wear a mask with eye protection, gown, and gloves when handling the body.
 - Bag the body; only single bag required. After placing the body in the bag, wipe down the outside of the bag with hospital-approved germicidal wipes.
 - After the body is in the bag, Contact precautions (gown and gloves) are sufficient when handling or transporting the body. An additional staff member without gown or gloves should travel with the body, in order to call the elevator and open doors.
- Once the body has been delivered to the morgue, transport staff wipes down the morgue transport cart with germicidal wipes per usual protocol.