



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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## Death Certificates and the Electronic Death Registration System

Dear Licensee:

For families who have lost loved ones, death certificates are an important part of achieving closure. Death certificates facilitate the process for settling the affairs of the decedent and are required for activities including burial or cremation, accessing and/or closing bank accounts, obtaining proceeds from life insurance policies, probating wills, and settling estates. Because the final disposition of a decedent depends upon this vital record, ***death certificates must be completed and filed in a timely manner.***

The Virginia Department of Health's Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) was created to facilitate the process of obtaining and filing death certificates in a timely manner. Legislation passed in 2018 and 2019 has required the use of this system by both funeral service providers and medical practitioners.

- Effective July 1, 2018, licensed funeral directors or funeral service licensees who complete death certificates are required to file the death certificate using the EDRS system.
- Effective July 1, 2018, if the death occurred while under the care of a hospice provider, the medical certification shall be completed by the decedent's health care provider and filed electronically using the EDRS.
- Effective July 1, 2019, all medical doctors, doctors of osteopathy, physicians assistants and nurse practitioners who practice as a hospitalist, practice emergency medicine in a hospital, or serve as a medical director of a nursing home must register with the EDRS and file death certificates through the system.
- Effective October 1, 2019, family medicine and internal medicine practitioners must register and begin using the EDRS system.
- Effective November 1, 2019, oncologists and general surgeons must register and begin using the EDRS system.
- Effective December 1, 2019, any other specialty that completes death certificates must register and begin using the EDRS system.

***It is important to note that failure to provide a signed death certificate in the timely manner prescribed by law, or failing or refusing to file the death certificate electronically using the EDRS system, may subject you to a complaint against your professional license.***

For licensees of the Board of Medicine, effective January 1, 2020, the following item was added to the Board's statute on unprofessional conduct (Virginia Code § 54.1-2915(A)):

*23. Failing or refusing to complete and file electronically using the Electronic Death Registration System any medical certification in accordance with the requirements of subsection C of § 32.1-263. However, failure to complete and file a medical certification electronically using the Electronic Death Registration System in accordance with the requirements of subsection C of § 32.1-263 shall not constitute unprofessional conduct if such failure was the result of a temporary technological or electrical failure or other temporary extenuating circumstance that prevented the electronic completion and filing of the medical certification using the Electronic Death Registration System.*

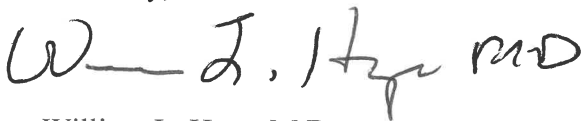
For funeral directors and funeral service licensees, the Board's statute, Virginia Code § 54.1-2806, provides the following as a cause for sanctioning a license:

*20. Violating or cooperating with others to violate any provision of Chapter 1 (§ 54.1-100 et seq.), Chapter 24 (§ 54.1-2400 et seq.), this chapter, or the regulations of the Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers or the Board of Health....*

For more information on the EDRS system, please visit the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Vital Records website at: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/vital-records/electronic-death-registration-system/>.

Thank you for the valuable service you provide to families who have lost loved ones and who need your assistance in completing this important final act. We encourage you to share this information with your colleagues and staff.

Sincerely,



William L. Harp, M.D.  
Executive Director  
Virginia Board of Medicine



Corie E. Tillman Wolf, J.D.  
Executive Director  
Virginia Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers