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Michelle Aurelius, MD
Chief Medical Examiner

To: North Carolina Board of Funeral Services
From: Michelle Aurelius, MD, Chief Medical Examiner
Date: April 7, 2020
Subject: Medical Examiner System's Testing of Decedents for COVID-19

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has received several inquiries regarding postmortem testing on decedents for COVID-19. Please be advised that testing for coronavirus will NOT be performed on decedents who have undergone a medicolegal autopsy or external examination except in very select few cases that are supported by the Division of Public Health. It should be assumed that community spread has already reached most, if not all, counties in this State. At this stage, treat all bodies as though they potentially harbor this virus. Practice appropriate care by wearing the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) when handling the body and alter procedures as necessary to reduce aerosolization of bodily fluids.

Please communicate with the decedent's next of kin and family members that NO testing will likely have been performed at autopsy or external examination due to scarcity of viral testing kits and other resources. Direct them to appropriate community resources on COVID-19 that explain social distancing and self-monitoring. Remind next of kin of the State's "Stay at Home" order as well as any other orders that may involve their community.

Thank you for your understanding during this time.

Resources:

- [Health and Safety Recommendations for Workers Who Handle Human Remains](#)
- [CDC guidance for postmortem specimens from deceased persons under investigation for COVID-19](#)
- [OSHA guidance for personal protective equipment](#)
- [North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Coronavirus Website](#)
- [Washington State Infection Prevention Guidance for Funeral Homes Handling Deceased Cases of COVID-19](#)
- NC DHHS guidance: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/covid-19-guidance>