The following is based on information available to date regarding management of confirmed and suspected COVID-19 deaths and is subject to change as new information becomes available.

The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services should be notified immediately upon the death of a person with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 by calling 603-271-4496 (after hours: 603-271-5300) or by completing and faxing the New Hampshire Confidential COVID-19 Case Report Form: https://www.nh.gov/covid19/resources-guidance/documents/covid19-reportingform.pdf.

Expected deaths due to COVID-19 do not need to be reported to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner as long as there are no external factors (e.g. trauma or drugs) that may have contributed to the death.

Death Certification

The death certificate must be completed electronically by the attending physician, APRN or PA as specifically as possible using “COVID-19” as the underlying cause of death https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvss/vsrg/vsrg03-508.pdf. For example, the death certificate may be completed as follows:

Part I. Cause of Death:
A. Acute respiratory distress syndrome
B. Pneumonia
C. COVID-19

If a definitive diagnosis cannot be made at the time of death, it is acceptable to use “Probable COVID-19” but every effort should be made to confirm the diagnosis with laboratory testing. Postmortem nasopharyngeal swabs may be collected and submitted for testing if necessary. If COVID-19 test results are pending at the time of death, then “Probable COVID-19 (pending test results)” is preferred. The death certificate should be amended by the medical certifier when test results become available. Other major co-morbidities (e.g. chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma) may be entered in Part II of the death certificate. The manner of death is natural.
Body Handling and Transport

For body handling and transport, PPE is necessary to protect mucous membranes, skin and clothing from contact with secretions and contaminated surfaces (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-postmortem-specimens.html#human-remains). N95 masks are not indicated in the absence of high aerosol generating postmortem procedures (e.g. autopsy or embalming).

Recommended PPE for handling and transporting bodies consists of the following:

- nonsterile, nitrile gloves.
- long-sleeved fluid-resistant or impermeable gown.
- face mask
- eye protection

When manipulating or moving the body, the decedent’s mouth and nose should be covered with a face mask or other barrier to minimize exposure to secretions. The body should be placed and transported in a leak-proof body bag. Disinfecting the body is not necessary but the outside of the bag should be cleaned with a bleach solution or EPA-registered disinfectants that have qualified under EPA’s emerging viral pathogens program for use against SARS-CoV-2 (https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2). The body bag should be labeled “COVID-19 positive” or “COVID-19 suspected,” if applicable. Used disposable PPE can be discarded in the same manner as any medical waste. Perform hand sanitization after removing PPE.