

# LAC+USC MEDICAL CENTER POLICY

Subject: <b>PATIENT DEATH</b>	Original Issue Date: 11/24/75	Policy # <b>228</b>
	Supersedes: 3/27/20	Effective Date: 3/29/23
Policy Owner(s): Administrator, Decedent Affairs Office Executive Sponsor(s): Chief Operating Officer		
Departments Consulted: Decedent Affairs Office Nursing Department Los Angeles Sheriff's Department HIPAA Office Risk Management	Reviewed & Approved by: Attending Staff Association Executive Committee Senior Executive Officer	Approved by: (Signature on File) Chief Operations Officer  (Signature on File) Chief Executive Officer

**PURPOSE**

To provide guidelines for the timely disposition of the deceased patient and to prevent undue hardship on the families/survivors.

**DEFINITION**

**Patient Death:** An individual who dies while receiving or waiting to receive medical treatment at any of the Medical Center's facilities.

**POLICY**

Deaths shall be reported to Decedent Affairs when requesting decedent pick up.

The Decedent Affairs Office shall be responsible for processing patient death records; ensuring appropriate agencies are notified of cases under their jurisdiction and complying with all pertinent laws and regulations regarding the release of information on the decedent. Protected health information may be released to the Coroner and funeral directors consistent with applicable law to permit the performance of their duties.

The remains of the decedent shall be released upon the written authority of the following, in the order named: (a) the decedent, by Will or Durable Power of Attorney, (b) Surviving Spouse, (c) Surviving Child/Children (adult), (d) Surviving Parent(s), (e) Persons in the next degree of kindred, (f) the Public Administrator.

Viewing of decedent remains in the morgue shall be restricted to the following:

- Where the legal next of kin (as defined above) did not see the decedent remains before removal to the morgue.
- For positive identification purposes when referral is made by law enforcement agencies or social workers.
- Cases in which the legal next-of-kin has authorized County disposition (cremation).

Homicide, suicide, or non-medically treated deaths shall be subject to Los Angeles Sheriff's Department investigation.

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**RESPONSIBILITY**

Administration  
Decedent Affairs Staff  
Attending Staff  
Allied Health Professionals  
Nursing Staff

**PROCEDURE DOCUMENTATION**

Decedent Affairs Office Policy and Procedure Manual  
Attending Staff Manual  
Nursing Services & Education Policy Manual

**REFERENCES**

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Parts 160 and 164  
Government Code #27491  
Military & Veterans Code, Article 2, Section 940-943  
California Health & Safety Code, Sections 7100, 7200, and 10250  
California Probate Code, Section 7600.5  
DHS Policies #s 316, Patient Deaths; and 153, Assisting the Coroner  
Joint Commission Standards (Ethics, Rights, and Responsibilities)

**REVISED DATES**

May 1, 1995; February 16, 1999; March 12, 2002, April 19, 2005; October 3, 2008;  
February 11, 2014; March 14, 2017; March 27, 2020; March 29, 2023