

Policy Handbook

Office the Skagit County Coroner

2026



Hayley Thompson

1700 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

360-416-1996



Published February 23, 2026

Hayley Thompson

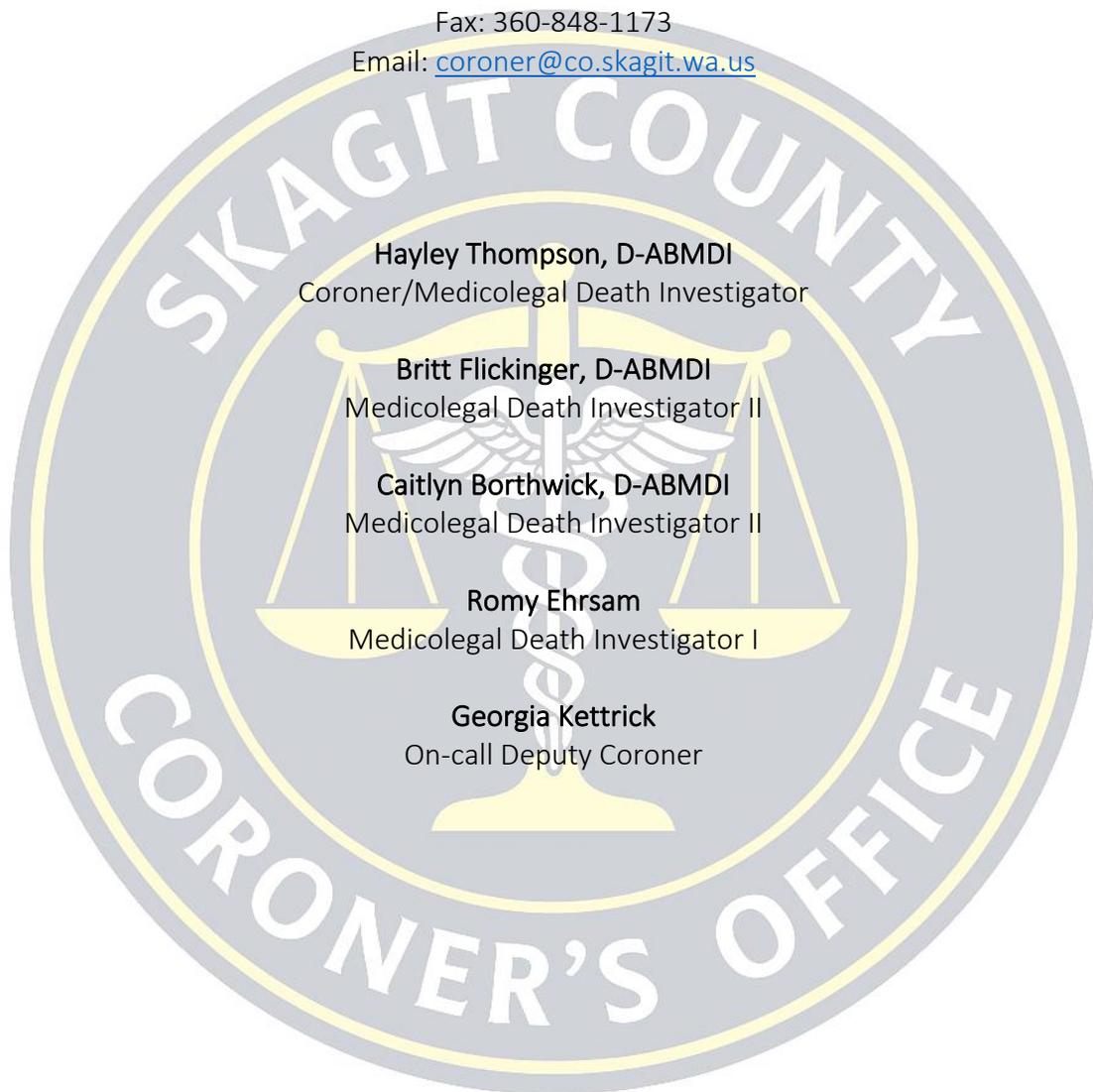
Office of the Skagit County Coroner

1700 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Telephone: 360-416-1996

Fax: 360-848-1173

Email: coroner@co.skagit.wa.us



Hayley Thompson, D-ABMDI
Coroner/Medicolegal Death Investigator

Britt Flickinger, D-ABMDI
Medicolegal Death Investigator II

Caitlyn Borthwick, D-ABMDI
Medicolegal Death Investigator II

Romy Ehram
Medicolegal Death Investigator I

Georgia Kettrick
On-call Deputy Coroner

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Administration

I.	Code of Conduct.....	7
II.	Ethical Standards.....	8
III.	Confidentiality and Release of Information.....	9
IV.	Coroner Office Organization Chart.....	11
V.	Coroner Staff Duties and Responsibilities.....	12
VI.	County Laptop Use.....	20
VII.	Employee Safety.....	21
VIII.	Immunization Policy.....	22
IX.	New Employee Training.....	23
X.	Participation in State Data Collection.....	24
XI.	Scheduling and Timesheets.....	25
XII.	Vehicle Maintenance.....	26

Evidence, Autopsies, and Examinations

I.	Autopsy Authorization, Oversight, and Standards of Practice.....	28
II.	Autopsy Services.....	30
III.	Autopsy Suite and Refrigeration.....	31
IV.	Chain of Custody: Specimen Collection, Evidence Handling, and Release.....	32
V.	Forensic Specialists.....	33
VI.	Post-Mortem Radiology.....	34

Investigations

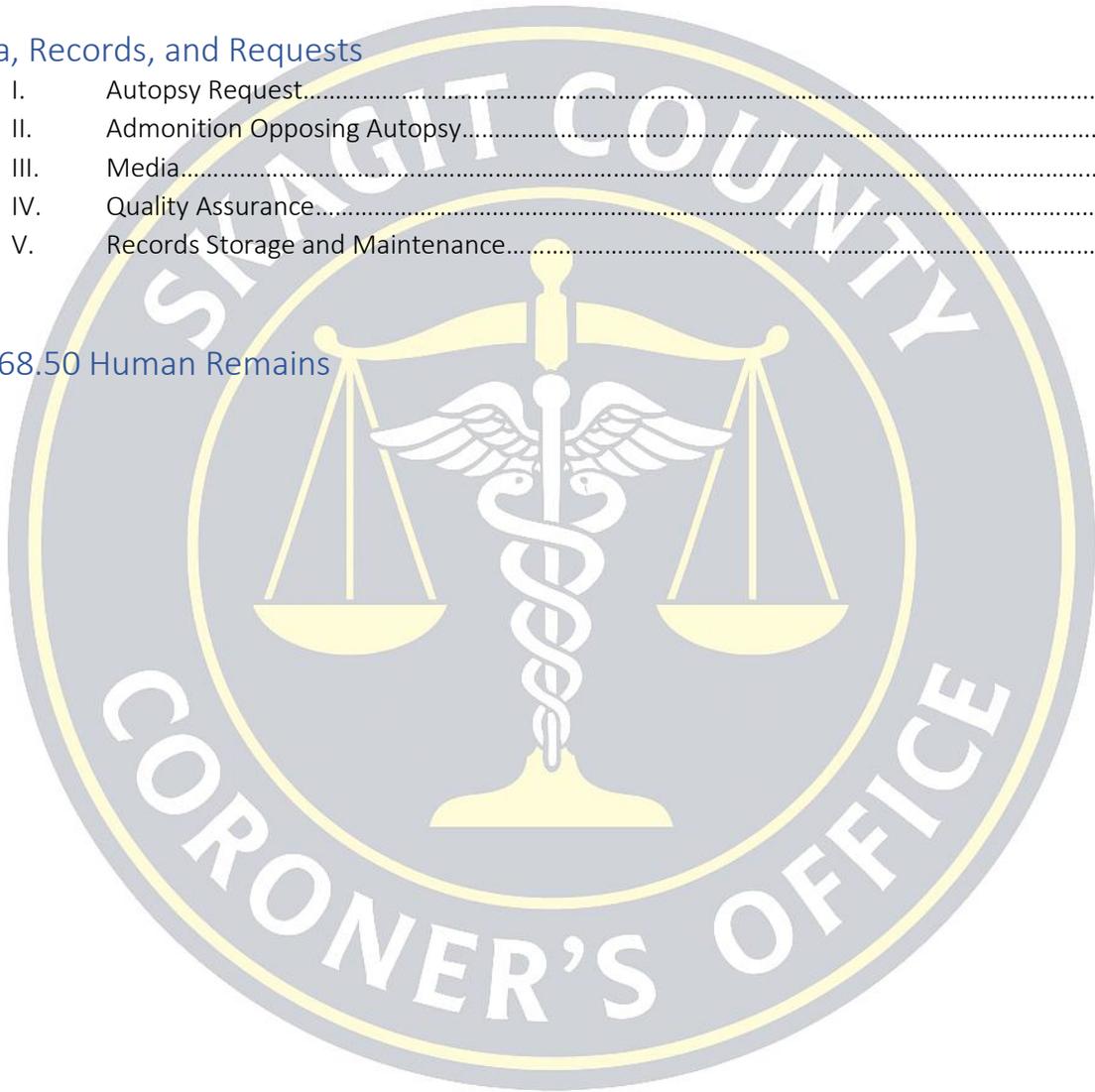
I.	Body Examination.....	36
II.	Body Release Form and Tracking.....	37
III.	Body Removal.....	38
IV.	Body Disposition, Transport, and Property Handling.....	39
V.	Case Numbering System.....	40
VI.	Chain of Custody.....	41
VII.	Contagious Disease Reporting.....	42
VIII.	Death Notification.....	43
IX.	Death Scene Protocol.....	44
X.	Determining Case Jurisdiction.....	44
XI.	Drug Handling.....	45
XII.	Establishing Cause and Manner of Death.....	46
XIII.	Fetal Demise.....	48
XIV.	Handling and Disposition of Deceased Animals at Scenes.....	49
XV.	Hazardous Chemicals.....	50
XVI.	Identification.....	51
XVII.	Infant and Child Death Investigation.....	52
XVIII.	Jurisdiction.....	53
XIX.	Mass Fatality.....	54

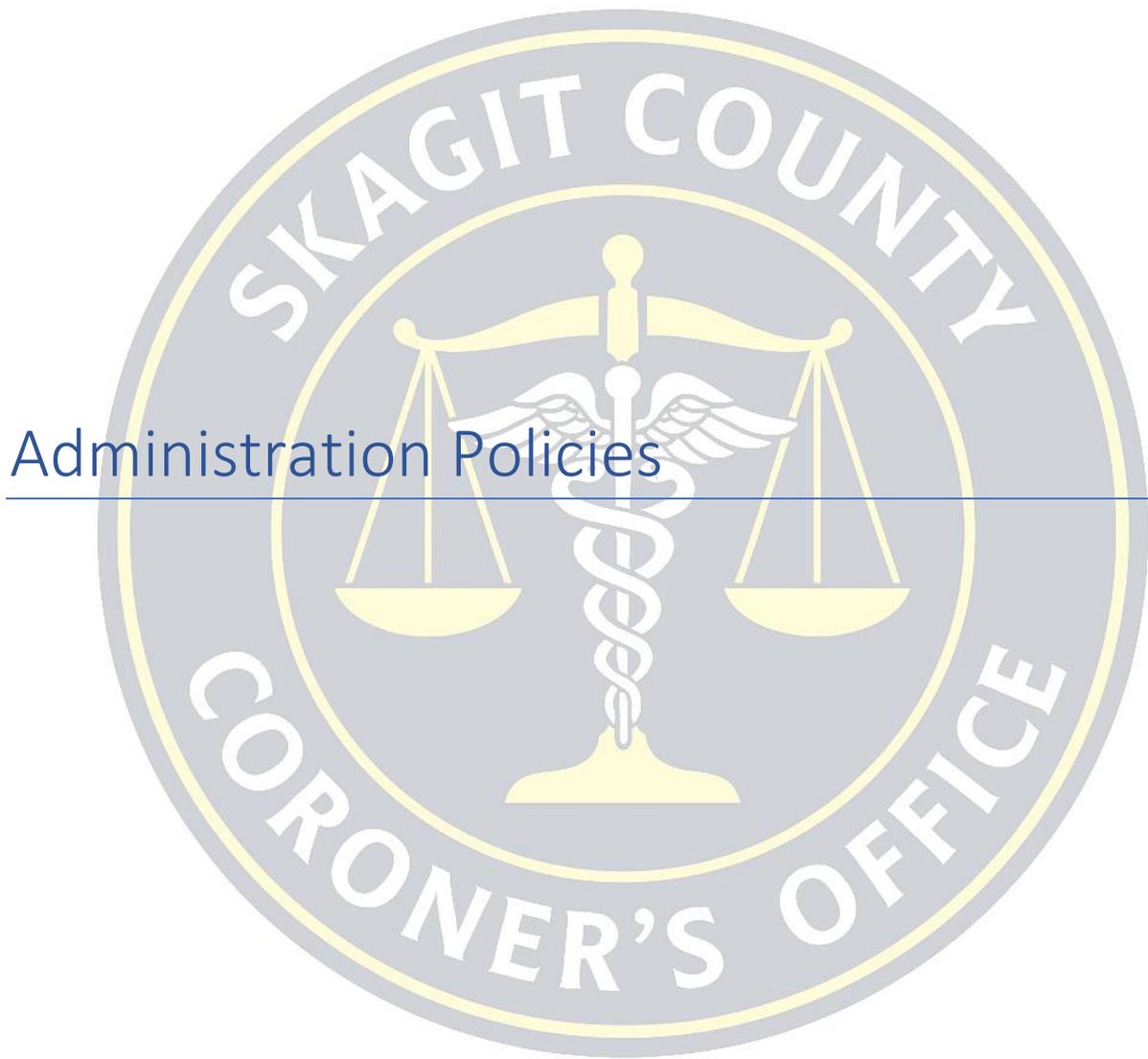
- XX. Notification of Next of Kin and unclaimed cases.....55
- XXI. Photography.....56
- XXII. Property.....57
- XXIII. Scene Documentation.....58
- XXIV. Sudden Infant Deaths and Fetal Demise.....59
- XXV. Tissue and Organ Donation.....60
- XXVI. Toxicology.....61
- XXVII. Unidentified Bodies.....62

Media, Records, and Requests

- I. Autopsy Request.....64
- II. Admonition Opposing Autopsy.....65
- III. Media.....66
- IV. Quality Assurance.....67
- V. Records Storage and Maintenance.....68

RCW 68.50 Human Remains





Administration Policies

Introduction

The information in this manual is intended to provide relevant Skagit County Coroner employees with the appropriate guidance regarding policies, procedures, and practices of the Skagit County Coroner's Office. The current information in this manual supersedes and replaces all prior published and unpublished policies.

Periodically, state and local laws are amended. These changes may have a direct or indirect effect on this office. Amendments will be made to this policy manual as these laws change, or as circumstances arise which warrant the alteration of any of the current policies of this office.

The Skagit County Coroner's Office reserves the right to rescind, modify, or deviate from these or any other policies as it considers necessary at its sole discretion, either in individual situations or otherwise.

Failure to comply

Failure to comply with any policy in this manual will be grounds for disciplinary action, not to exclude immediate termination.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Skagit County Coroner's Office is to serve our community through independent, compassionate, and professional medicolegal death investigations. We are dedicated to finding the truth in every case while honoring the decedent and supporting their families and loved ones.

The Skagit County Coroner's Office will investigate all deaths within its jurisdiction according to state law. Duly qualified personnel will conduct investigations in a timely manner using sound scientific methods. Trust and confidence in the ability of the Coroner's Office will be established through cooperation with related agencies and citizens of Skagit County.

Anti-Harassment Policy

The Skagit County Coroner's Office is committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has a right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, the Skagit County Coroner's Office expects that all relationships among persons in the office be business-like and free of bias, prejudice, and harassment.

Equal Employment Opportunity

It is the policy of the Skagit County Coroner's Office to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status, citizenship or any other characteristic protected by law. The Skagit County Coroner's Office prohibits any such discrimination.

Confidentiality

All personnel are required to sign the Skagit County Coroner's Office Confidentiality Agreement prohibiting the release of any information or material to anyone outside of the Coroner's Office other than authorities who have direct jurisdiction in an investigation. This includes: deaths, investigations, follow-ups, and photographs. All Skagit County Coroner's Office Personnel will adhere to this policy. Disregarding this policy for any reason will be grounds for disciplinary action, not excluding immediate termination.

Skagit County Coroner’s Office Employee or Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement

As an employee or volunteer, I understand that I may have access to confidential information, which may include, but is not limited to conversations, financial information, statistical records, internal reports, memos, communications, and third-party information.

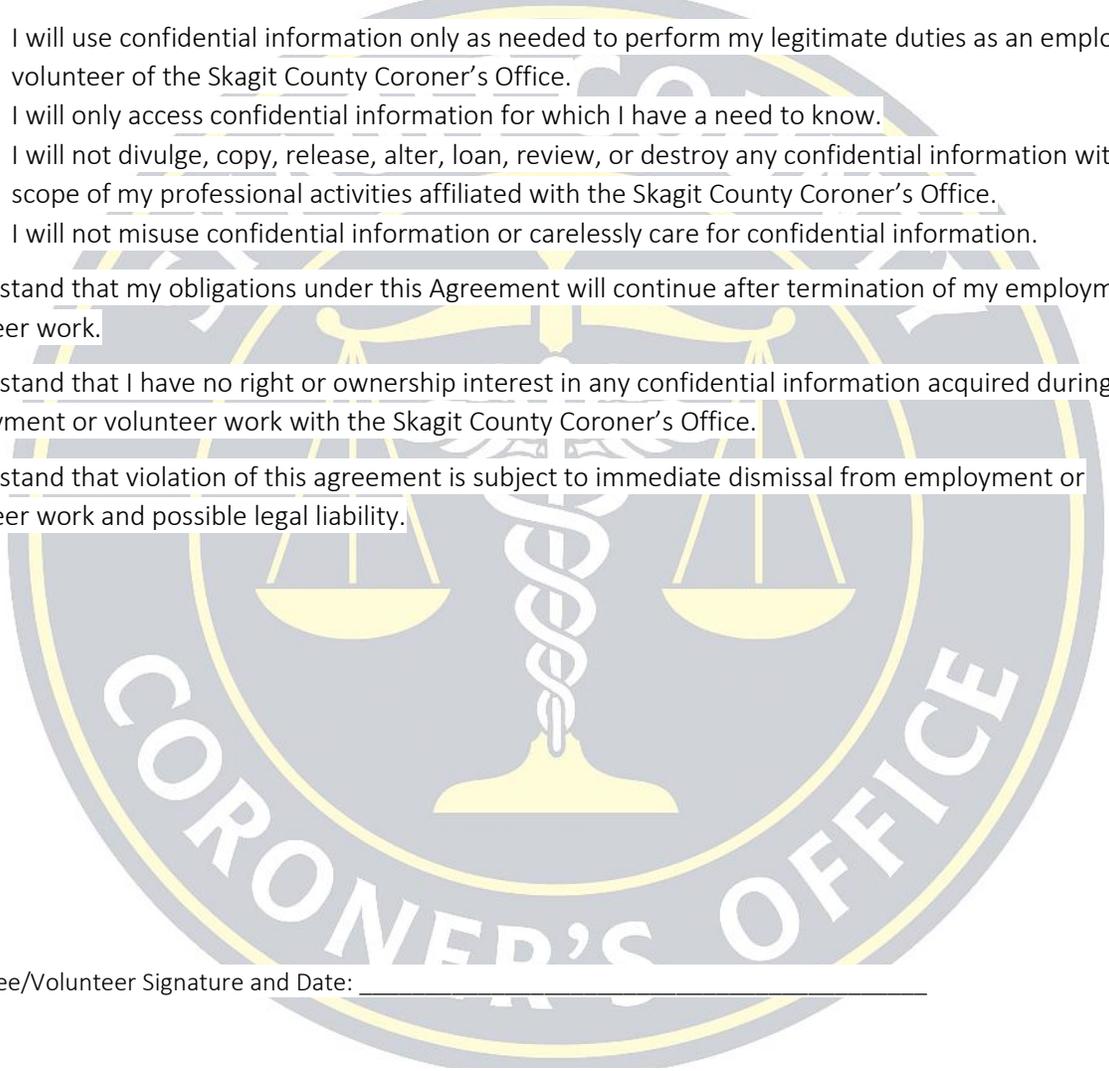
Accordingly, as a condition of and in consideration of my access to confidential information, I promise that:

1. I will use confidential information only as needed to perform my legitimate duties as an employee or volunteer of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office.
2. I will only access confidential information for which I have a need to know.
3. I will not divulge, copy, release, alter, loan, review, or destroy any confidential information within the scope of my professional activities affiliated with the Skagit County Coroner’s Office.
4. I will not misuse confidential information or carelessly care for confidential information.

I understand that my obligations under this Agreement will continue after termination of my employment or volunteer work.

I understand that I have no right or ownership interest in any confidential information acquired during my employment or volunteer work with the Skagit County Coroner’s Office.

I understand that violation of this agreement is subject to immediate dismissal from employment or volunteer work and possible legal liability.



Employee/Volunteer Signature and Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Code of Conduct

Reporting for Duty

Every employee of the Skagit County Coroner's Office shall report promptly for work, court, and all other appointments at their assigned time and with all necessary equipment. Unless an emergency prevents otherwise, an employee unable to work due to illness or other reason shall notify the Coroner or Lead Investigator no less than three hours prior to the expected time of their duty.

Responding to Calls

Every employee of the Skagit County Coroner's Office shall respond promptly to scene calls or other requests for service and will make themselves available for service as soon as possible once a call is completed.

Obedience to Orders

Employees shall diligently, completely, and without delay or question, carry out all lawful orders of a supervisor that pertain to the performance of their duty. No supervisor shall knowingly issue any order that is unlawful.

Insubordination and Disrespect/Slander

Employees will willingly submit to reasonable authority and will not disregard the expressed or implied directions of a supervisor.

Employees will not, through gestures, or defamatory statements, show disrespect to a supervisor or to another employee.

Employees shall not make false, vicious, slanderous, or malicious statements about employees of the department to anyone. Employees shall not make false statements to supervisors when questioned, interviewed, or in submitting statements or reports.

Death Scene Reports

Medicolegal Death Investigators will submit all necessary reports on time and in accordance with established departmental procedures. Employees shall not make a false report or knowingly enter or cause to be entered any inaccurate false, or misrepresented facts in any official record.

Ethical Standards Policy

The effectiveness of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office depends on community respect and confidence. Conduct which detracts from this respect and confidence is detrimental to the public interest and should be prohibited. The policy of this office is to investigate circumstances suggesting an employee has engaged in unbecoming conduct and impose disciplinary action when appropriate.

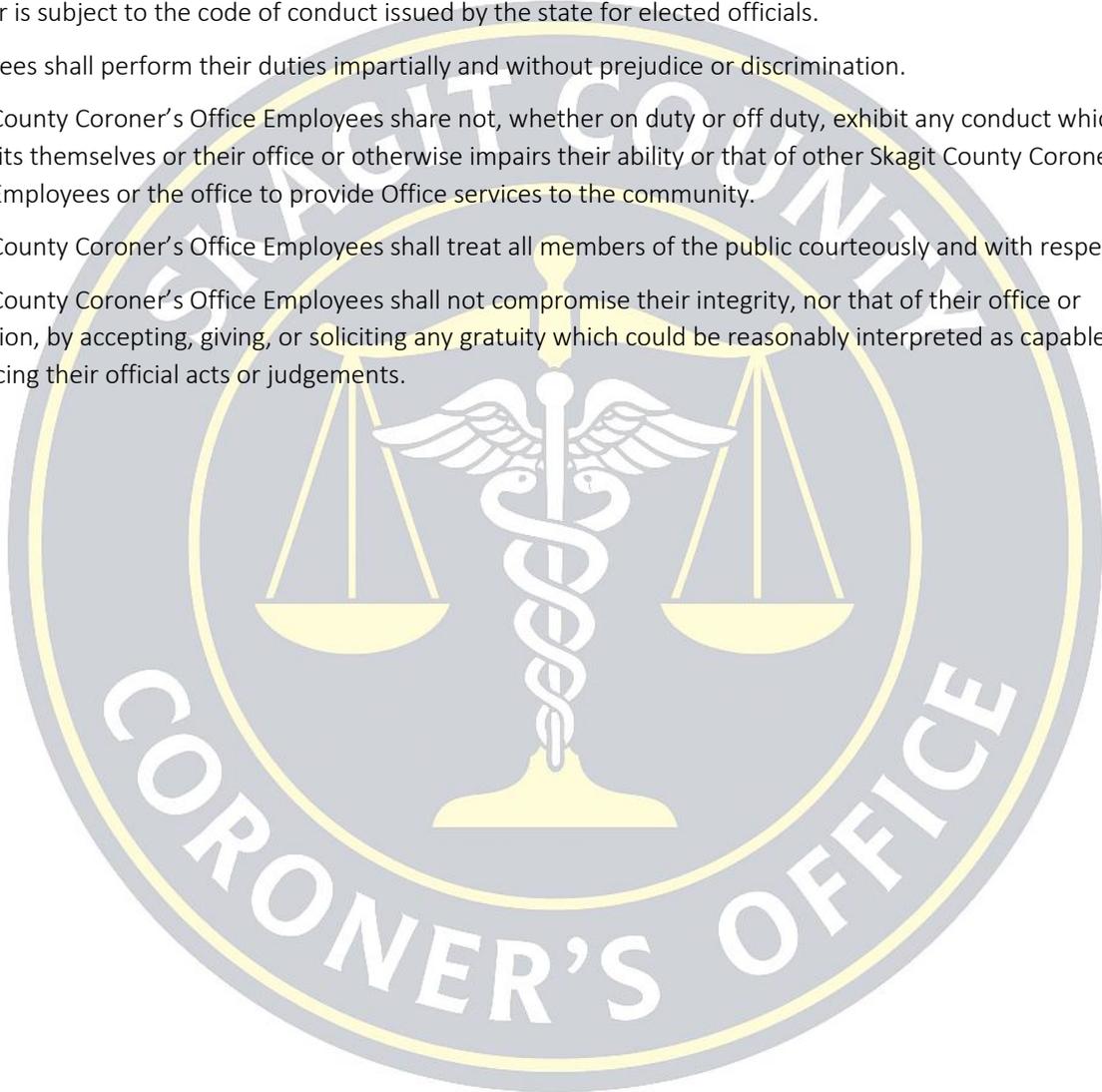
The term “Employee” refers to any Skagit County Coroner’s Office employee, including Medicolegal Death Investigators, as well as any personnel working or volunteering with the Skagit County Coroner’s Office. The Coroner is subject to the code of conduct issued by the state for elected officials.

Employees shall perform their duties impartially and without prejudice or discrimination.

Skagit County Coroner’s Office Employees share not, whether on duty or off duty, exhibit any conduct which discredits themselves or their office or otherwise impairs their ability or that of other Skagit County Coroner’s Office Employees or the office to provide Office services to the community.

Skagit County Coroner’s Office Employees shall treat all members of the public courteously and with respect.

Skagit County Coroner’s Office Employees shall not compromise their integrity, nor that of their office or profession, by accepting, giving, or soliciting any gratuity which could be reasonably interpreted as capable of influencing their official acts or judgements.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
11/18/2024	10/17/2025

Confidentiality & Release of Information Policy

The Skagit County Coroner's Office is committed to protecting the privacy and security of confidential information related to death investigations. All employees must adhere to established procedures to ensure proper handling, storage, and release of sensitive materials.

- Confidential information must be stored securely in locked file cabinets or offices when not in use.
- Unauthorized individuals—including members of the general public and employees without clearance—must not access or view confidential information.
- Employees are prohibited from releasing confidential information to unauthorized parties.
- In compliance with HIPAA, protected health information may be disclosed to funeral directors, coroners, or medical examiners for purposes such as identifying the deceased, determining cause of death, or performing other legally authorized functions.
- The release of documents, photographs, and reports generated by the Coroner's Office is restricted to authorized individuals only, upon receipt of a written request, relationship affirmation, and valid government-issued identification.
- Authorized individuals may include, but are not limited to: legal next of kin, immediate family members, investigating agencies, treating physicians, and legal representatives.
- Employees must be familiar with and follow RCW 68.50.105 and RCW 68.50.300 regarding confidentiality and public release of information.

RCW 68.50.105 Autopsies, postmortems — Reports and records confidential — Exceptions.

(1) Reports and records of autopsies or postmortems shall be confidential, except that the following persons may examine and obtain copies of any such report or record: The personal representative of the decedent as defined in RCW [11.02.005](#), any family member, the attending physician or *advanced registered nurse practitioner, the prosecuting attorney or law enforcement agencies having jurisdiction, public health officials, the department of labor and industries in cases in which it has an interest under RCW [68.50.103](#), the secretary of the department of children, youth, and families or his or her designee in cases being reviewed under RCW [74.13.640](#), or the secretary of the department of social and health services or his or her designee under chapter [74.34](#) RCW.

(2)(a) Notwithstanding the restrictions contained in this section regarding the dissemination of records and reports of autopsies or postmortems, nor the exemptions referenced under RCW [42.56.240\(1\)](#), nothing in this chapter prohibits a coroner, medical examiner, or his or her designee, from publicly discussing his or her findings as to any death subject to the jurisdiction of his or her office where actions of a law enforcement officer or corrections officer have been determined to be a proximate cause of the death, except as provided in (b) of this subsection.

(2)(b) A coroner, medical examiner, or his or her designee may not publicly discuss his or her findings outside of formal court or inquest proceedings if there is a pending or active criminal investigation, or a criminal or civil action, concerning a death that has commenced prior to January 1, 2014.

(3) The coroner, the medical examiner, or the attending physician shall, upon request, meet with the family of the decedent to discuss the findings of the autopsy or postmortem. For the purposes of this section, the term "family" means the surviving spouse, state registered domestic partner, or any child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, or sister of the decedent, or any person who was guardian of the decedent at the time of death.

RCW 68.50.300 Release of information concerning a death

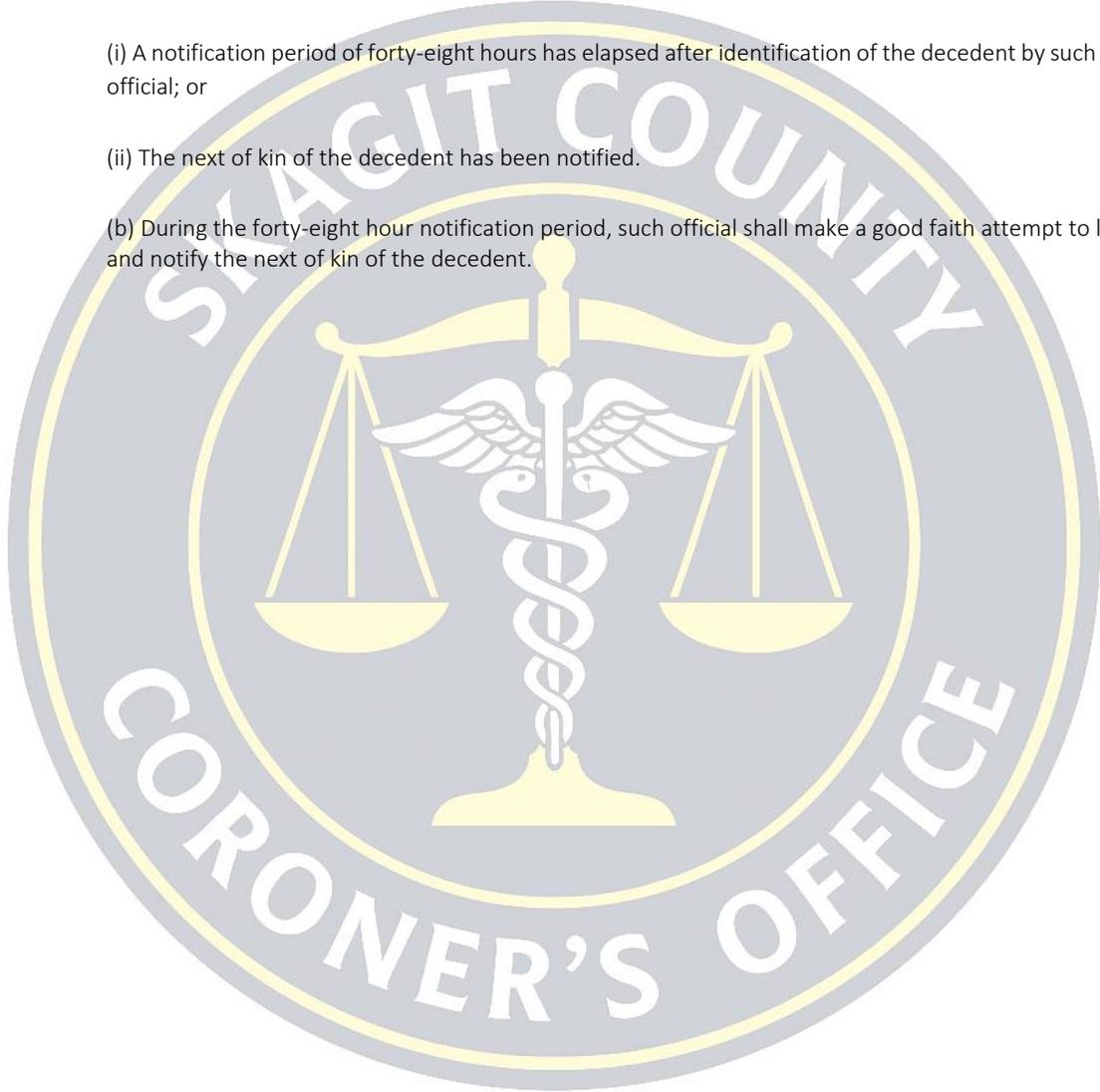
(1) The county coroner, medical examiner, or prosecuting attorney having jurisdiction may in such official's discretion release information concerning a person's death to the media and general public, in order to aid in identifying the deceased, when the identity of the deceased is unknown to the official and when he or she does not know the information to be readily available through other sources.

(2)(a) The county coroner, medical examiner, or prosecuting attorney may withhold any information which directly or indirectly identifies a decedent until either:

(i) A notification period of forty-eight hours has elapsed after identification of the decedent by such official; or

(ii) The next of kin of the decedent has been notified.

(b) During the forty-eight hour notification period, such official shall make a good faith attempt to locate and notify the next of kin of the decedent.



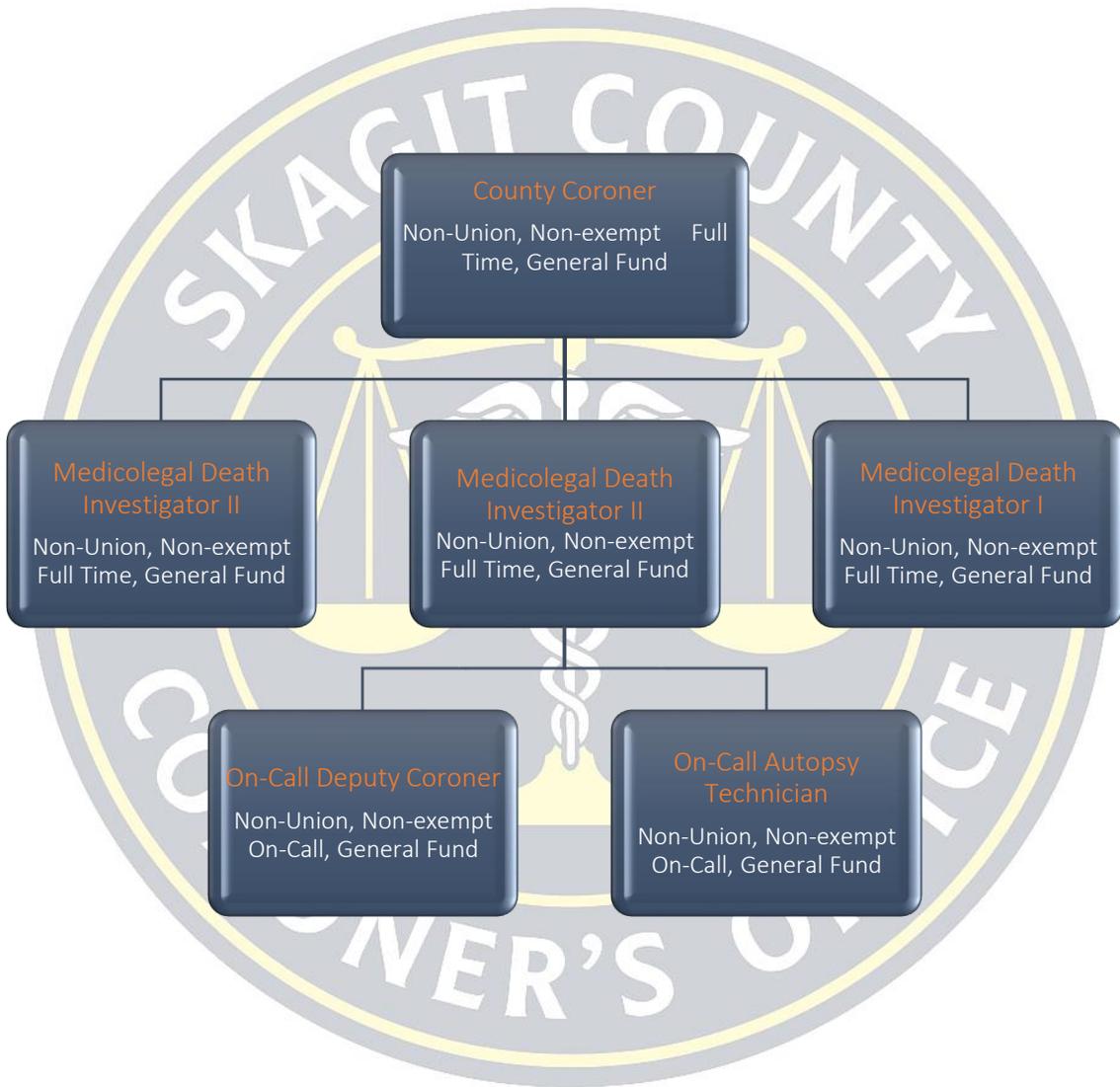
Date Implemented ***Date Revised***

02/24/2017

02/10/2025

10/17/2025

Skagit County Coroner's Office Organization Chart



Coroner Duties and Responsibilities

Supervisory Responsibilities

- Provide 24/7 oversight of death investigation operations and staff supervision.
- Respond promptly to incoming calls or texts from staff.
- Maintain consistent weekly office hours.
- Conduct daily check-ins with staff at the start of each shift to review assignments and follow up on case progress.
- Direct and supervise staff activities, ensuring equitable workload distribution.
- Collaborate with medicolegal death investigators on case-related issues and operational concerns.
- Oversee departmental operations:
 - Delegate duties
 - Approve leave requests
 - Evaluate performance
 - Conduct staff counseling and disciplinary actions
- Support onboarding and training of new staff and interns.

Administrative Responsibilities

- Review case files to ensure completeness and accuracy of documentation in the MDI log.
- Confirm cases are ready for closure.
- Prepare and distribute staff work schedules.
- Monitor departmental budget and submit amendments as needed.
- Prepare and submit:
 - Annual budget requests
 - Quarterly budget reports to the County
- Maintain and analyze office statistics, including:
 - Annual drug overdose and suicide data
 - General death trends
- Create and publish the Annual Report on the Coroner's website.
- Maintain website content, including statistics and confirmation of death listings.
- Act as the designated Public Information Officer for the Coroner's Office, ensuring consistent, accurate, and timely communication with the public and media.
- Receive, evaluate, and respond to all media inquiries related to death investigations, public health concerns, and office operations.
- Coordinate with internal staff and external agencies to verify information prior to release.
- Draft and publish authorized media releases to the Coroner's Office webpage.
- Ensure posted content complies with legal standards, privacy protections, and investigative integrity.
- Receive and address inquiries or concerns from the public that require a response from the Coroner's Office.
- Evaluate the nature of each concern to determine appropriate action, whether informational, investigative, or administrative.
- Provide timely, respectful, and legally appropriate communication while maintaining confidentiality and investigative integrity.
- Coordinate with internal staff or external agencies as needed to ensure accurate and consistent messaging.
- Respond to case data requests from WA Violent Death Reporting System and SUDORS.
- Track and submit autopsy reimbursement requests (February and August).

- Submit invoices for facility use in donation cases.
- Track and report quarterly volunteer hours.
- Create and manage contracts with funeral homes, forensic pathologists, and other service providers.
- Conduct annual policy reviews and implement updates.
- Manage financial operations:
 - Submit monthly credit card payments
 - Prepare and verify invoices for submission to the Auditor's Office
 - Enter and submit payroll
- Assist in staff scheduling and coordination of meetings.
- Maintain open communication with staff regarding updates and procedural changes.
- Conduct annual performance reviews and quarterly goal-setting meetings with each employee.
- Liaise with law enforcement, hospitals, nursing facilities, hospice, and primary care providers regarding coroner procedures and case coordination.
- Attend quarterly state Coroner/Medical Examiner meetings.
- Provide education and data to medical professionals on death trends, organ donation, and public health concerns.
- Represent Skagit County and the Coroner's Office at local, state, and federal agencies and professional organizations.
- Stay informed on current medical and forensic developments.

Daily Operational Tasks

- Certify death certificates as required.
- Prepare and submit affidavits for corrections.
- Conduct medical record reviews and summaries for case documentation.
- Draft comprehensive investigative statements and reports to support determination of cause, manner, and mechanism of death.
- Coordinate with forensic specialists (e.g., pathologists, anthropologists, odontologists, DNA analysts, crime labs) for case services.
- Review toxicology results and determine need for consultation or follow-up.
- Finalize case reviews prior to closure.

As-Needed Support Tasks

- Perform general clerical duties: phone calls, file preparation, record maintenance, correspondence, and transcription.
- Assist with incoming death calls and scene responses.
- Respond to suspicious, homicide, or infant death calls when senior investigators are unavailable.
- Provide assistance and support during autopsies and external examinations.
- Assist with collection of toxicology samples, fingerprints, and x-rays.
- Facilitate body release to funeral homes.
- Document and manage property and evidence collection and release.
- Conduct and verify next-of-kin (NOK) searches for indigent or unclaimed cases.
- Assist with NOK notification and indigent cremation paperwork.
- Testify in court when subpoenaed.

Medicolegal Death Investigator II

This is a summary of duties, refer to job classification for full details

Supervisory Responsibilities

- Serve as the lead investigator and primary point of contact in the Coroner's absence.
- Provide guidance and oversight to subordinate staff, including:
 - Medicolegal Death Investigator I
 - On-call deputy coroners
 - Interns
- Train new staff and interns in investigative procedures, documentation, and office protocols.
- Review and verify completion of casework in the MDI log, including narratives, worksheets, and photographs.
- Evaluate case files for initial review and prepare them for formal Coroner assessment.

Administrative Responsibilities

- Manage and submit accounts payable documentation.
- Develop and maintain the staff work schedule.
- Monitor inventory levels and order supplies as needed.
- Track toxicology testing, reports, and sample retention.
- Oversee in-house property management:
 - Dispose or release unclaimed items for auction after designated holding period.
- Manage toxicology and stock tissue retention and disposal per policy.
- Enter and monitor unidentified cases in NamUs, ensuring compliance with state law.
- Oversee unclaimed and indigent cases:
 - Investigate potential family connections
 - Contact interested parties after 45 days regarding cremains
 - Secure proper documentation and reimbursement for cremation services
- Provide insight and/or assistance to the coroner on:
 - Policy implementation and annual review
 - Internship and job applicant screening
 - Interviewing and selecting new hires
 - Developing new programs and initiatives for the office

Daily Operational Tasks

- Answer incoming calls and respond to emails in the general Coroner inbox.
- Receive and document death investigation reports; respond to scenes as needed.
- Take lead on complex cases including suspicious deaths, homicides, and infant fatalities.
- Ensure timely and professional scene response.
- Conduct thorough scene investigations:
 - Document conditions
 - Take photographs
 - Interview witnesses
- Complete required forms
- Examine the decedent at the scene and ensure accurate identification.
- Notify next of kin promptly and compassionately.

Case Management & Documentation

- Communicate with families and loved ones with empathy and professionalism.
- Document, inventory, and collect personal property accompanying the decedent.
- Transport decedents to the Coroner's Office when directed.
- Complete case narratives and upload all relevant documents to MDI log.
- Review and summarize medical records for applicable cases.
- Contact medical providers for additional information or to notify of a death.
- Follow up with external agencies (e.g., L&I, APS, CPS, NTSB, law enforcement, ATF, FBI) for case updates.
- Release bodies, property, and evidence to appropriate parties.
- Package and submit toxicology samples with requisition forms.
- Submit specialized lab samples, histology, and fingerprints as needed.
- Request government-issued identification to support case documentation.
- Obtain EMS reports, agency records, and medical files; upload to MDI log.
- Maintain communication with families and agencies throughout the case lifecycle.
- Finalize and close out cases.
- Process public and agency records requests.

Forensic & Technical Support

- Assist forensic pathologists during autopsies.
- Perform external examinations, including fingerprinting and toxicology collection.
- Take x-rays for cases requiring imaging.
- Certify death certificates when authorized by the Coroner.
- Consult with the Coroner for guidance as needed.
- Coordinate with forensic specialists (e.g., pathologists, anthropologists, odontologists, DNA analysts, crime labs) for case services.
- Conduct next-of-kin searches for indigent or unclaimed cases.
- Notify and locate next of kin.
- Transport skeletal remains to King County Medical Examiner's Office.
- Transport cases for autopsy services when requested.
- Complete indigent cremation paperwork when requested.
- Retrieve cremains from funeral homes or donation programs.

Professional Development & On-Call Duties

- Complete required and assigned training courses.
- Fulfill scheduled on-call shifts and holiday assignments.

Duties of Medicolegal Death Investigator I

Works under the direction of the Coroner and Medicolegal Death Investigator II

Communication & Scene Response

- Answer incoming calls and respond to emails via the Coroner's general account.
- Receive and document death investigation reports.
- Respond promptly to death scenes, ensuring timely arrival and professional conduct.
- Lead or assist in investigations involving suspicious deaths, homicides, infant fatalities, and other complex cases.

Scene Investigation & Documentation

- Conduct thorough scene investigations, including:
 - Detailed documentation
 - Photographic evidence
 - Witness and family interviews
 - Completion of required forms
- Examine the decedent at the scene and make observations relevant to the investigation.
- Ensure accurate identification of the decedent.
- Notify next of kin in a compassionate and timely manner.
- Communicate with family members and loved ones with empathy and professionalism.

Evidence & Property Management

- Document, inventory, and collect personal property accompanying the decedent.
- Release property to designated parties, funeral homes, or law enforcement agencies.
- Release evidence to appropriate agencies as required.
- Package and submit toxicology samples with completed requisition forms.
- Submit lab samples, histology, and fingerprints for identification and analysis.
- Request government-issued identification to support case documentation.

Case Documentation & Follow-Up

- Write detailed case narratives and complete entries in the MDI log.
- Upload supporting documents, including EMS reports, agency records, and medical files.
- Review and summarize medical records for applicable cases.
- Contact medical offices to notify of deaths or obtain additional information.
- Follow up with external agencies (e.g., L&I, APS, CPS, NTSB) for case updates.
- Maintain communication with families and designated agencies throughout the case lifecycle.
- Assist with case closure and process records requests.

Forensic & Technical Support

- Assist forensic pathologists during autopsies.
- Perform external examinations, including fingerprinting and toxicology collection.
- Capture radiographs (x-rays) for cases requiring imaging.
- Transport decedents to the Coroner's Office or other facilities as directed.
- Transport skeletal remains to King County Medical Examiner's Office.
- Coordinate transportation for autopsy services.

- Retrieve remains from funeral homes or donation programs.
- Coordinate with forensic specialists (e.g., pathologists, anthropologists, odontologists, DNA analysts, crime labs) for case services.

Next-of-Kin (NOK) Coordination

- Conduct and verify NOK searches for indigent or unclaimed cases.
- Locate and notify NOK with professionalism and sensitivity.

Administrative & Team Support

- Attend staff meetings and contribute to team operations.
- Take required or assigned training courses to maintain professional competency.



Duties of the On-Call Deputy Coroner

Accountability & Scheduling

- Act as the designated on-call representative for the Coroner's Office, reporting directly to the coroner or, in their absence, to the Medicolegal Death Investigator II.
- Fulfill assigned on-call shifts based on office coverage needs, primarily during evening and early morning hours, with potential for 24-hour coverage during holidays or limited staff availability.
- Receive advance notice of scheduled on-call days and ensure availability during assigned shifts.

Communication & Readiness

- Remain accessible by phone throughout the on-call shift; promptly respond to all incoming calls and text messages.
- Ensure the issued cell phone is powered on and operational, especially if unused for several days.
- Maintain timely and clear communication with the Coroner or Medicolegal Death Investigator II regarding incoming calls, scene updates, and case developments.

Scene Response & Investigation

- Respond promptly to death scenes and conduct thorough investigations, including:
 - Scene documentation
 - Photographic evidence
 - Interviews with witnesses or family members
- Completion of required forms
- Perform detailed examinations of the decedent at the scene.
- Confirm positive identification of the decedent and notify next of kin in a compassionate and professional manner.
- Communicate with family members and loved ones with empathy and respect.

Evidence & Transport

- Document, inventory, and collect personal property found with the decedent.
- Transport the decedent to the Coroner's Office when directed.
- Assist with autopsies or external examinations as requested.

Documentation & Case Handoff

- Complete all required reports and documentation before the end of the shift.
- Communicate any necessary follow-up actions to the incoming investigator and update the follow-up tracking document accordingly.

Coroner's Office Intern Duties and Responsibilities

Scene Support & Field Assistance

- Accompany investigators to death scenes and assist with:
 - Scene evaluation and documentation
 - Body examination and observations
 - Removal and transport of the decedent to the Coroner's Office

Intake & Case Documentation

- Assist with admitting the decedent at the Coroner's Office
- Support case setup by:
 - Creating labels and case files
 - Updating the whiteboard
 - Scanning and uploading documents to the MDI log
 - Sending and receiving faxes
- Help with releasing bodies to funeral homes
- Assist in collecting, documenting, and releasing property or evidence

Autopsy & Examination Support

- Prepare the autopsy suite prior to procedures
- Assist the forensic pathologist and investigator during autopsies
- Support external body examinations
- Label, package, and store biological samples appropriately

Operational & Administrative Tasks

- Perform daily vehicle checks, restock supplies, and refuel vehicles as needed
- Answer incoming office calls when other staff are unavailable
- Maintain cleanliness of the morgue and assist with laundry duties
- Greet and assist families, the public, and agency representatives at the front desk
- Request death certificates and verify accuracy against MDI log entries
- Assist the Coroner and investigators with special projects or assignments

Internship Completion

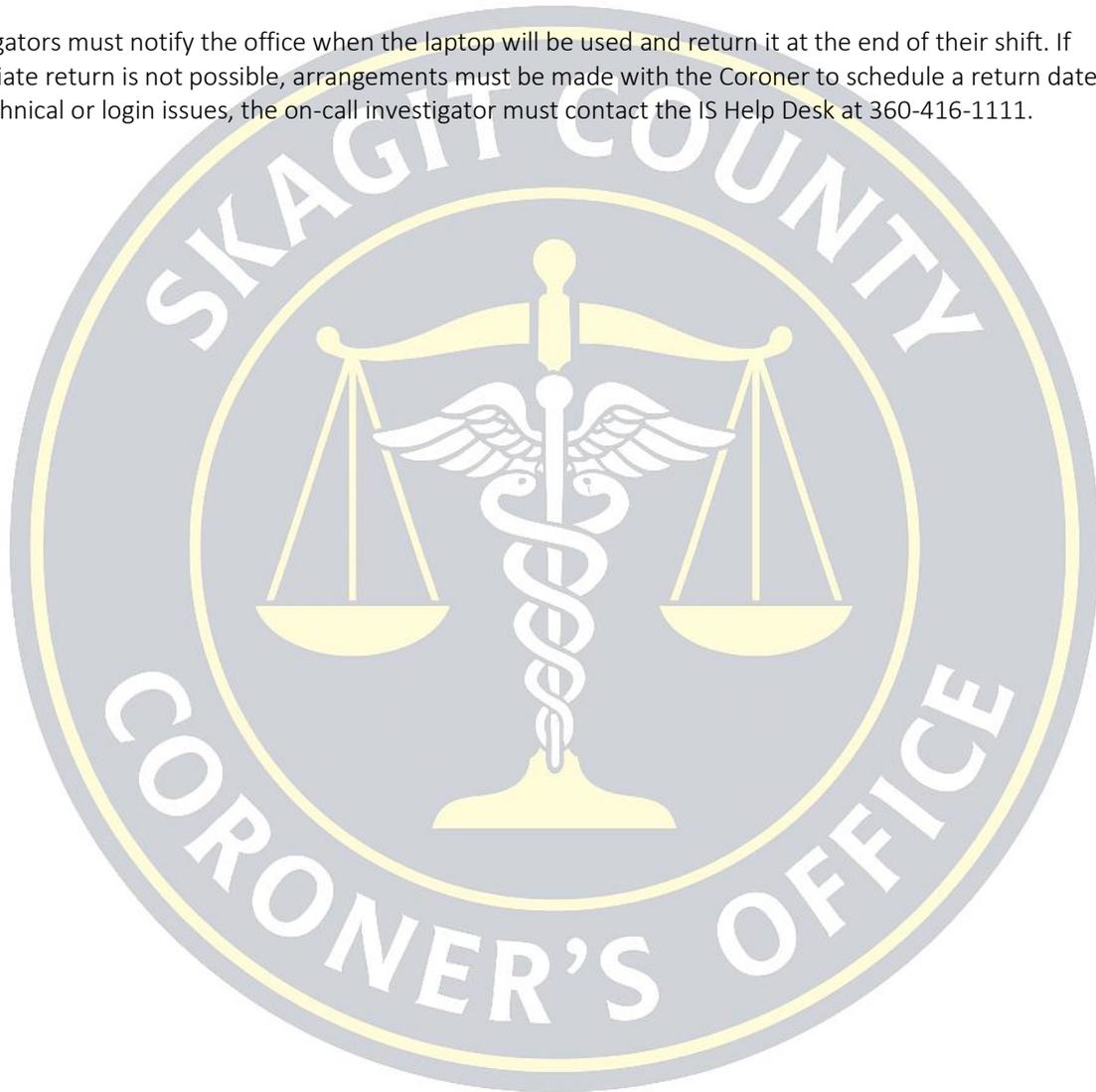
- Maintain written documentation of internship activities and experiences

County Laptop Use Policy

Policy: Use of Designated Laptop for Remote Shifts

The Skagit County Coroner’s Office maintains a designated laptop for use by medicolegal death investigators during remote shifts. This includes on-call coverage from home after business hours, weekends, and holidays when the office is closed. The laptop is intended to support essential investigative functions and ensure continuity of operations during non-office hours.

Investigators must notify the office when the laptop will be used and return it at the end of their shift. If immediate return is not possible, arrangements must be made with the Coroner to schedule a return date. For any technical or login issues, the on-call investigator must contact the IS Help Desk at 360-416-1111.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
08/19/2022	12/14/2023	11/18/2024
		10/17/2025

Employee Safety Policy

Purpose

To ensure the health and safety of all employees by adhering to local, state, and federal safety regulations and implementing universal precautions to prevent workplace injuries and exposure to biological hazards.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office, including full-time, part-time, on-call, temporary, and contract staff.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/24/2017	07/14/2022
------------	------------

	11/8/2024
--	-----------

	10/17/2025
--	------------

Employee Immunization Policy

Purpose

To promote workplace health and safety by offering approved vaccinations to new employees during onboarding, while respecting individual choice and compliance with Washington State law.

Scope

This policy applies to all new employees of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office, including full-time, part-time, and temporary staff.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
12/23/2023	11/12/2024	10/17/2025

New Employee Training Policy

Purpose

To ensure that all newly hired Medicolegal Death Investigators (MDIs) receive comprehensive training, supervision, and certification in accordance with state and national standards.

Scope

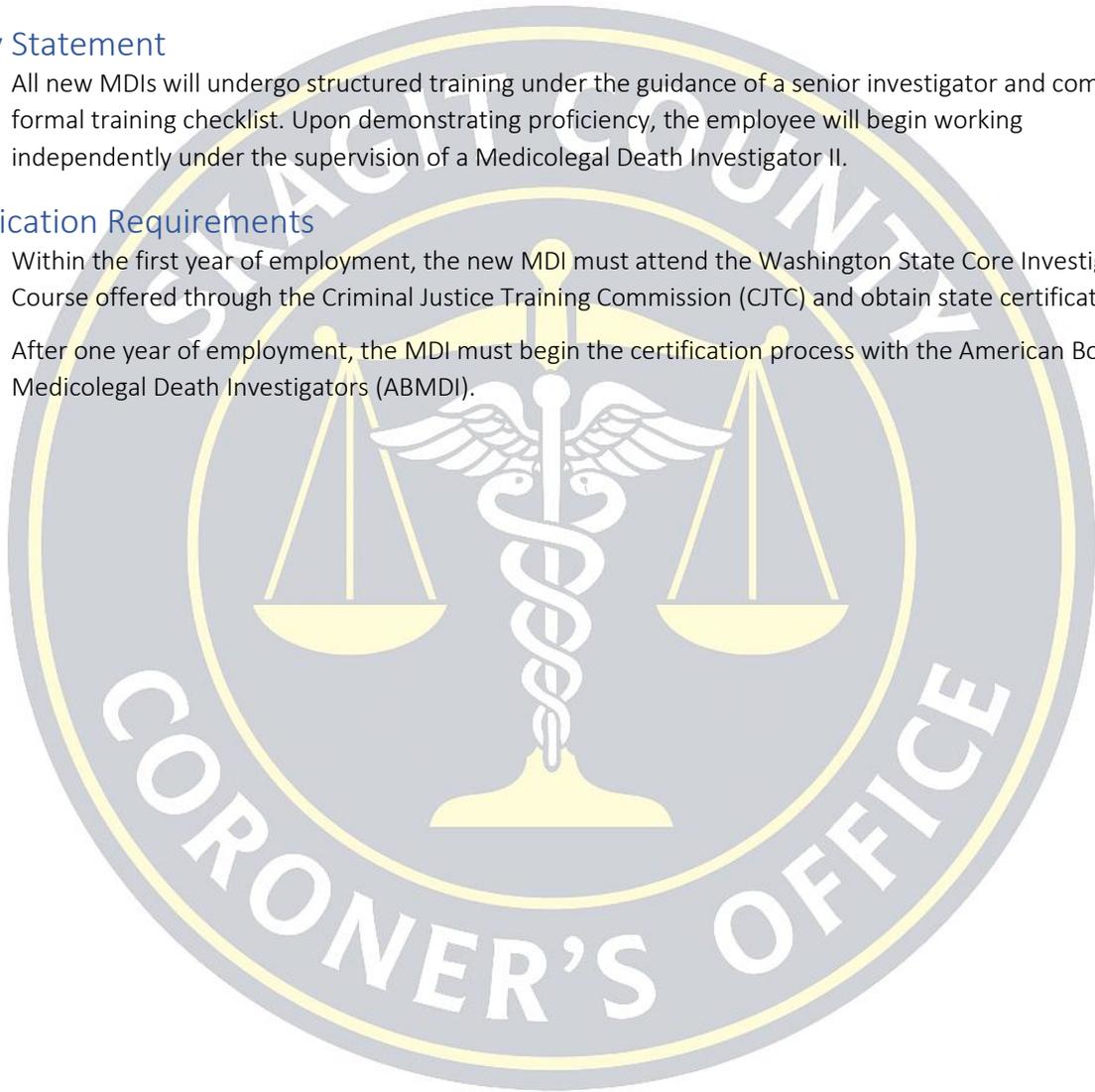
This policy applies to all new MDI staff employed by the Skagit County Coroner’s Office.

Policy Statement

All new MDIs will undergo structured training under the guidance of a senior investigator and complete a formal training checklist. Upon demonstrating proficiency, the employee will begin working independently under the supervision of a Medicolegal Death Investigator II.

Certification Requirements

- Within the first year of employment, the new MDI must attend the Washington State Core Investigation Course offered through the Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) and obtain state certification.
- After one year of employment, the MDI must begin the certification process with the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI).



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
12/4/2025	10/17/2025

Participation in State Data Collection Policy

Purpose

To outline the procedures for sharing case information with authorized review boards and regulatory agencies, ensuring transparency, public safety, and compliance with state and federal reporting requirements.

Scope

This policy applies to all cases investigated by the Skagit County Coroner’s Office that meet criteria for external review or regulatory reporting.

Policy Statement

The Skagit County Coroner’s Office will make case information available for review to the following authorized entities when applicable:

- Washington State Violent Death Review Board (NVDRS)
- Washington State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (SUDORS)
- Child Fatality Review Board
- Medical and Correctional Facilities Review Boards
- State drug reporting programs

In addition, the Coroner’s Office will notify and coordinate with relevant regulatory agencies when appropriate, including but not limited to:

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
- Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I)
- Consumer Product Safety Commission or designated representatives
- Washington State Office of Independent Investigations (OII)

These notifications will be made when a case involves workplace fatalities, product-related deaths, or other incidents requiring regulatory oversight.

<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
02/24/2017	07/14/2022	11/8/2024
		10/13/2025

Scheduling and Time Sheets Policy

Purpose

To establish clear procedures for requesting leave, scheduling shifts, managing on-call duty pay, and submitting time sheets for all staff and interns within the Coroner’s Office.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

08/28/2017	11/12/2024
------------	------------

	10/15/2025
--	------------

Vehicle Maintenance Policy

Purpose

To ensure that all response vehicles and associated equipment used by the Skagit County Coroner’s Office are properly maintained, stocked, and ready for deployment at all times.

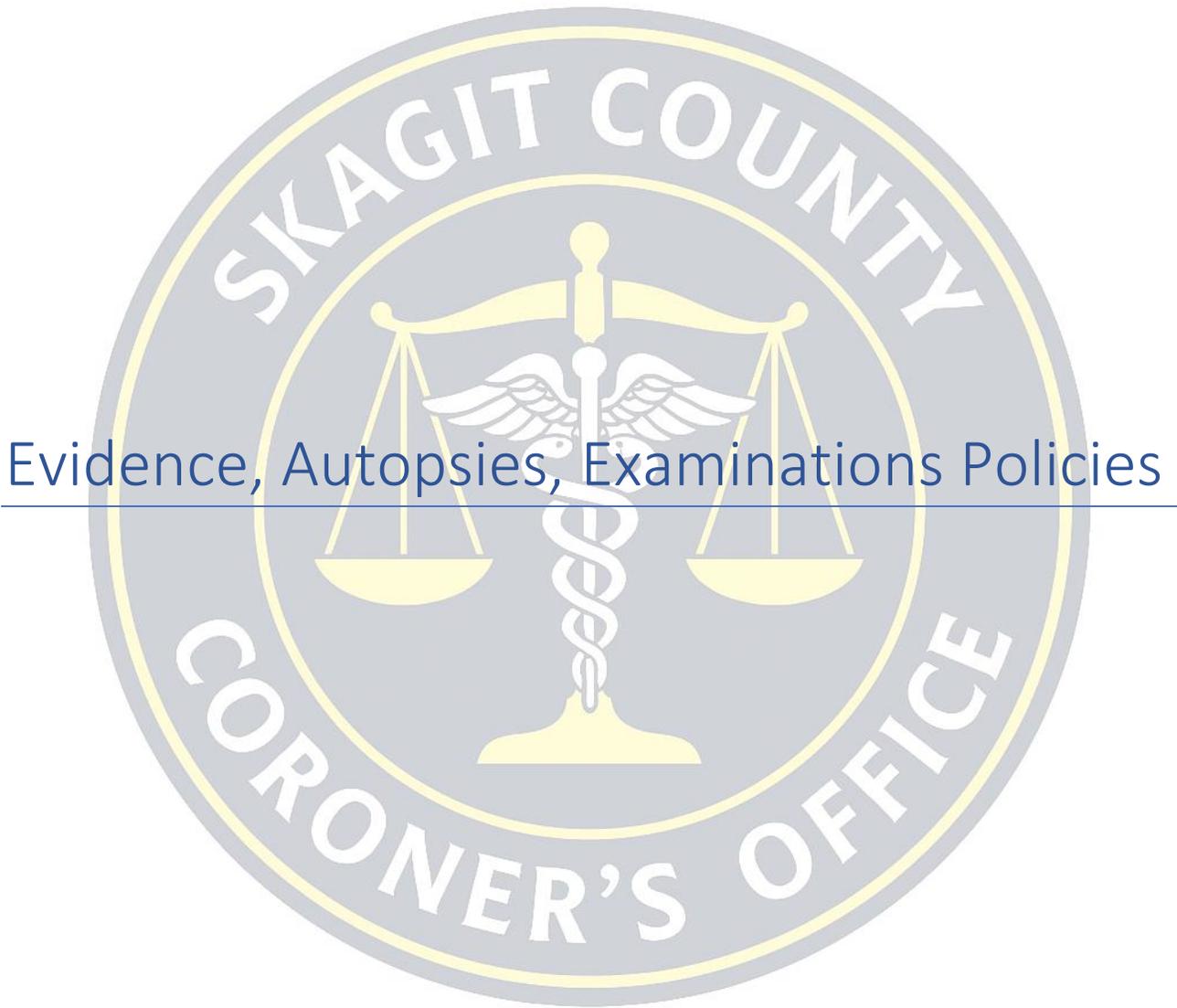
Scope

This policy applies to all Medicolegal Death Investigators and authorized personnel responsible for operating and maintaining Coroner’s Office vehicles and equipment.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/24/2017	07/08/2022
	11/8/2024
	10/15/2025



Evidence, Autopsies, Examinations Policies

Autopsy Authorization, Oversight, and Standards of Practice Policy

Autopsies shall be performed by a Board-certified Forensic Pathologist when necessary to:

- Determine or confirm the cause of death
- Document injury
- Comply with Washington State law

If a Board-certified Forensic Pathologist is unavailable, the Coroner's Office will transport the case to a NAME or IACME accredited facility for autopsy services.

The Coroner has the legal authority to determine whether an autopsy is necessary. Not all deaths require autopsy, but all cases involving the Coroner will undergo a comprehensive investigation.

Forensic Pathologist Requirements

- Must be licensed to practice medicine in Washington State, verified annually by Skagit County.
- Must sign a contract with Skagit County outlining services and fees.
- The Coroner's Office shall maintain contracts with at least two Board-certified Forensic Pathologists.

The Forensic Pathologist is responsible for:

- Performing postmortem examinations
- Diagnosing cause and manner of death
- Forming and documenting opinions
- Providing expert testimony when required

Criteria for Autopsy Consideration

Autopsies should be considered in the following circumstances:

- Sudden death of a healthy individual with no known medical history
- Violent or suspicious deaths
- Suspected drug overdose or drug-related deaths
- Accidental deaths (e.g., traffic or recreational)
- Suicides
- Deaths involving suspected abuse or neglect (including APS/CPS history)
- Infant or child deaths
- Work-related fatalities
- In-custody deaths
- Cases where cause and manner of death cannot be determined without autopsy

Investigative Requirements

Investigators must provide the Forensic Pathologist with:

- Photographs
- Demographic information
- A detailed report or summary of the death circumstances

Autopsy Definitions and Standards

Complete Autopsy Includes:

- External examination of the entire body
- Internal examination of thoraco-abdominal and neck organs
- Removal and examination of the brain
- All dissections must be performed by a Board-certified Forensic Pathologist.
- All assistants (technicians, dieners, etc.) must work under direct supervision of the pathologist.

Partial Autopsy

Defined as an examination that forgoes any part of the complete autopsy, such as:

- Not opening body cavities
- Not examining organs
- Examining organs in situ

Examples include:

- A decedent with a significant medical history who sustained a significant fall and did not undergo diagnostic imaging to establish the presence or absence of suspected intracranial trauma.
- A decedent with an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head in which the projectile must be recovered from within the cranium.

External Examination

- Involves detailed documentation of:
 - Scars, surgical incisions, medical devices, tattoos, and other identifying features
 - No internal cuts or organ examinations are performed.
- Requires completion of:
 - External examination forms
 - Body diagrams
 - Digital photographs of significant injuries

Autopsy Documentation

- Autopsy reports must be completed for every autopsy case.
- Reports must be:
 - Clear, concise, and interpretable by medical professionals
 - Include cause and manner of death
 - Digital photographs shall be used to document significant injuries.
 - Specimens must be retained for toxicological and histological examination.
 - Histology is at the discretion of the pathologist and may not be performed in all cases.

Compliance

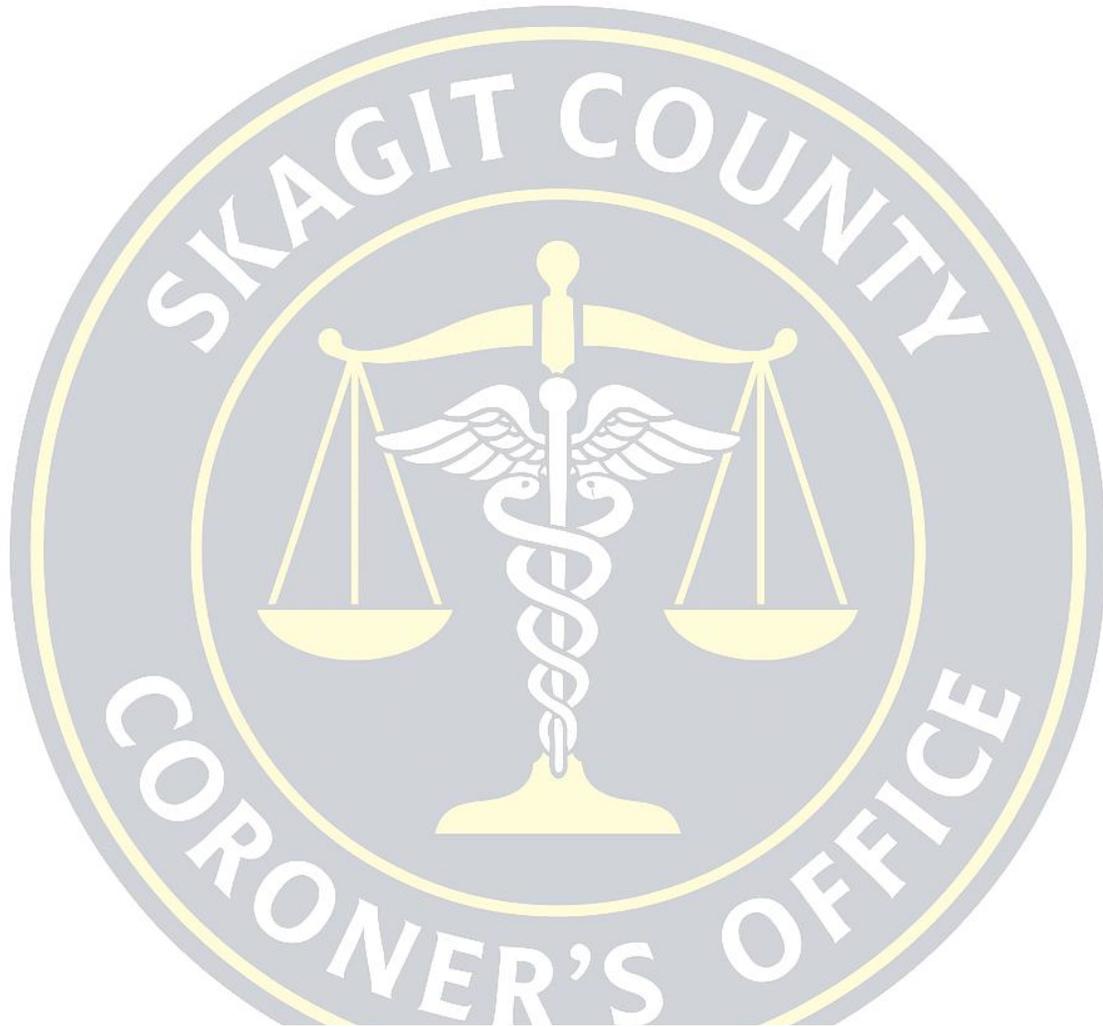
All autopsies shall be conducted in accordance with the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) Autopsy Standards.

<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
02/24/2017	08/17/2022
	12/14/2023
	11/7/2024
	10/17/2025

Autopsy Services Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines the procedures and standards for conducting autopsies under the jurisdiction of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office. It ensures that postmortem examinations are performed in accordance with state law and professional standards to determine cause and manner of death, document injuries, and support public health and safety.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/24/2017	08/17/2022
	12/14/2023
	11/7/2024
	10/17/2025

Autopsy Suite and Refrigeration Policy

Purpose

To ensure the autopsy suite and refrigeration units are maintained in a clean, sanitary, and safe condition that protects staff, visitors, and the integrity of medicolegal investigations.

Scope

Applies to all personnel involved in autopsy procedures, cleaning, and maintenance of the autopsy suite and adjacent areas.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
02/24/2017	11/8/2024	07/12/2022
		10/17/2025

Evidence Collection, Handling and Documentation Policy

Purpose

To ensure the proper collection, handling, and documentation of evidence requested by law enforcement during forensic examinations, while minimizing contamination and maintaining chain of custody.

Scope

This policy applies to all Coroner staff, Forensic Pathologists, and law enforcement personnel present during autopsy procedures involving evidence collection.

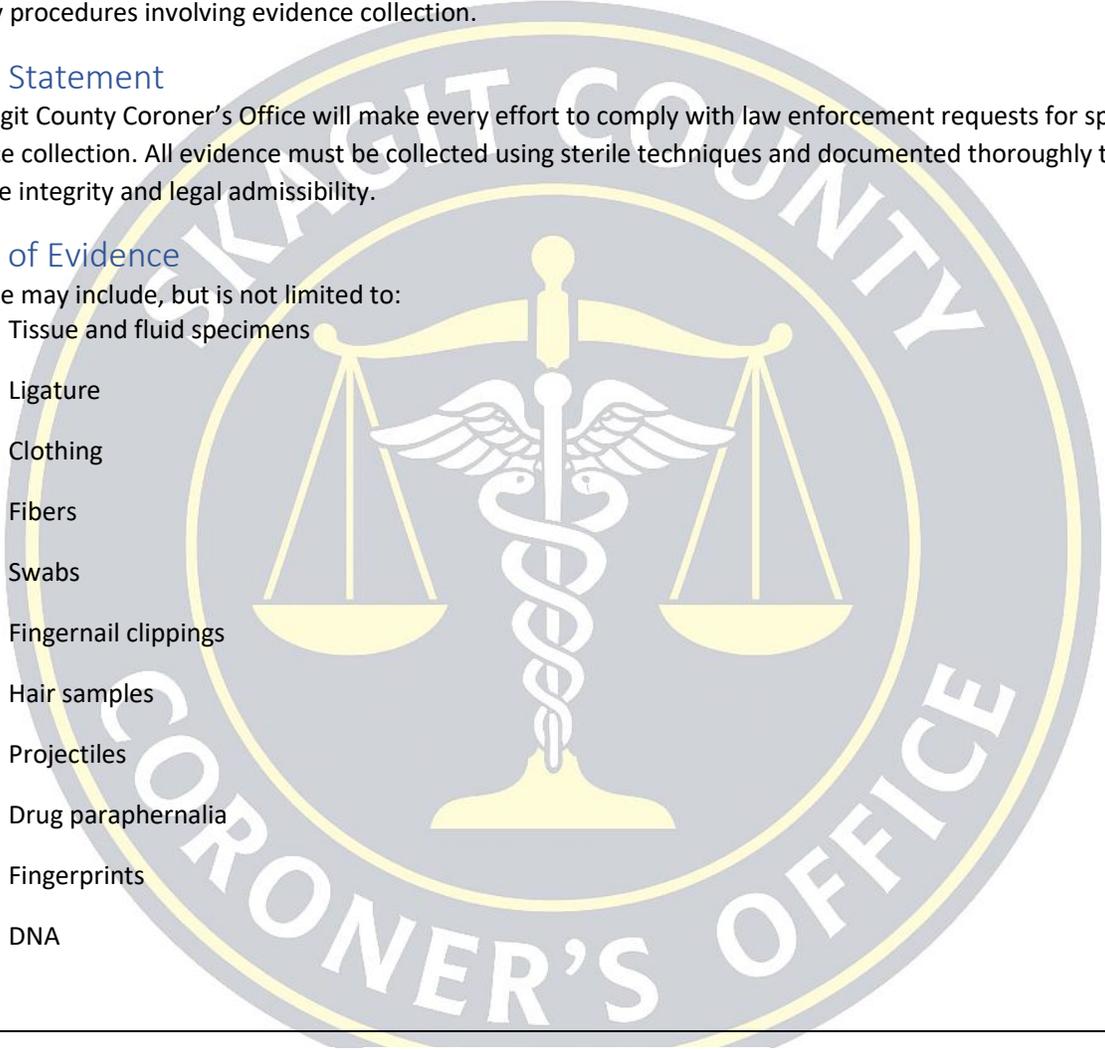
Policy Statement

The Skagit County Coroner’s Office will make every effort to comply with law enforcement requests for specific evidence collection. All evidence must be collected using sterile techniques and documented thoroughly to preserve integrity and legal admissibility.

Types of Evidence

Evidence may include, but is not limited to:

- Tissue and fluid specimens
- Ligature
- Clothing
- Fibers
- Swabs
- Fingernail clippings
- Hair samples
- Projectiles
- Drug paraphernalia
- Fingerprints
- DNA



Date Implemented **Date Revised**

<i>05/15/2019</i>	07/14/2022
	12/04/2024
	10/17/2025

Forensic Specialists Policy

Purpose

To define the authorized use of qualified forensic specialists in the identification and analysis of human remains under the jurisdiction of the Skagit County Coroner, in accordance with RCW 68.50.330.

Scope

This policy applies to all Coroner staff and contracted forensic specialists including odontologists, anthropologists, and other forensic consultants.

Legal Authority

RCW 68.50.330 permits the Coroner to engage qualified specialists to assist in the identification of remains.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	----------------------	---------------------

03/08/2017	11/8/2024	07/8/2022
------------	-----------	-----------

Post-mortem Radiology Policy

Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for the use of postmortem radiology in autopsy examinations and ensure safe, accurate, and consistent imaging practices within the Skagit County Coroner’s Office.

Policy Statement

Postmortem radiology is an essential component of certain autopsy examinations. The decision to obtain X-rays is at the discretion of the Coroner or the Board-Certified Forensic Pathologist.

Prior to the release of the decedent, the Coroner’s Office must ensure that:

- X-rays are taken at appropriate exposure levels to allow for valid interpretation
- Each radiograph is labeled with the unique case number
- Images are properly oriented using left/right designations

Indications for Postmortem X-Rays

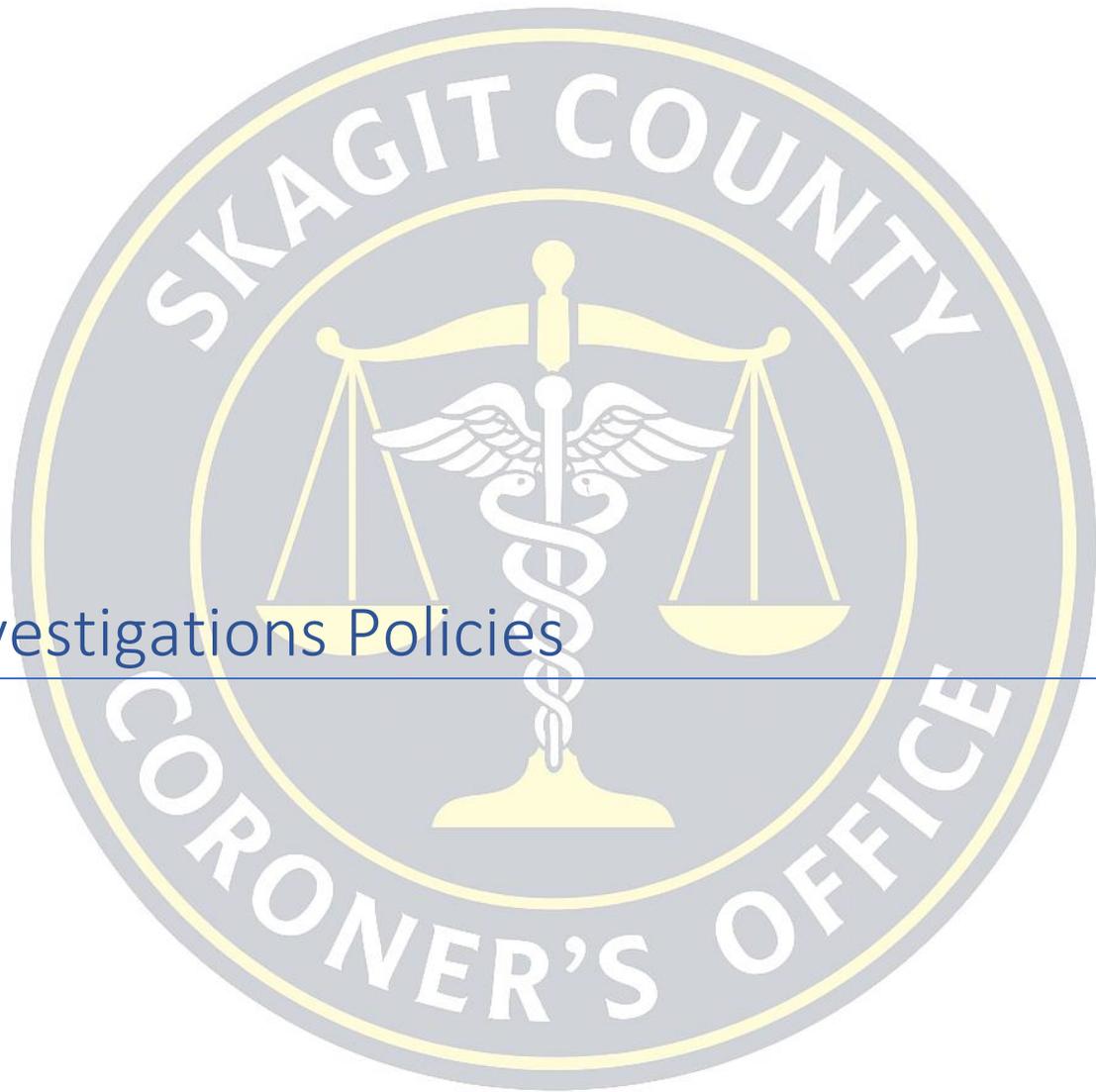
X-rays shall be obtained in the following types of cases:

- Penetrating and perforating trauma
- Gunshot wounds
- Blunt force trauma (e.g., traffic-related accidents)
- Sharp force injuries
- Decomposed remains
- Skeletonized remains
- Homicides
- Pediatric cases
- Deaths caused by explosive devices
- Charred remains
- Unidentified remains
- Traffic fatalities

Date Implemented ***Date Revised***

07/14/2022	11/18/2024
	10/14/2025

Investigations Policies



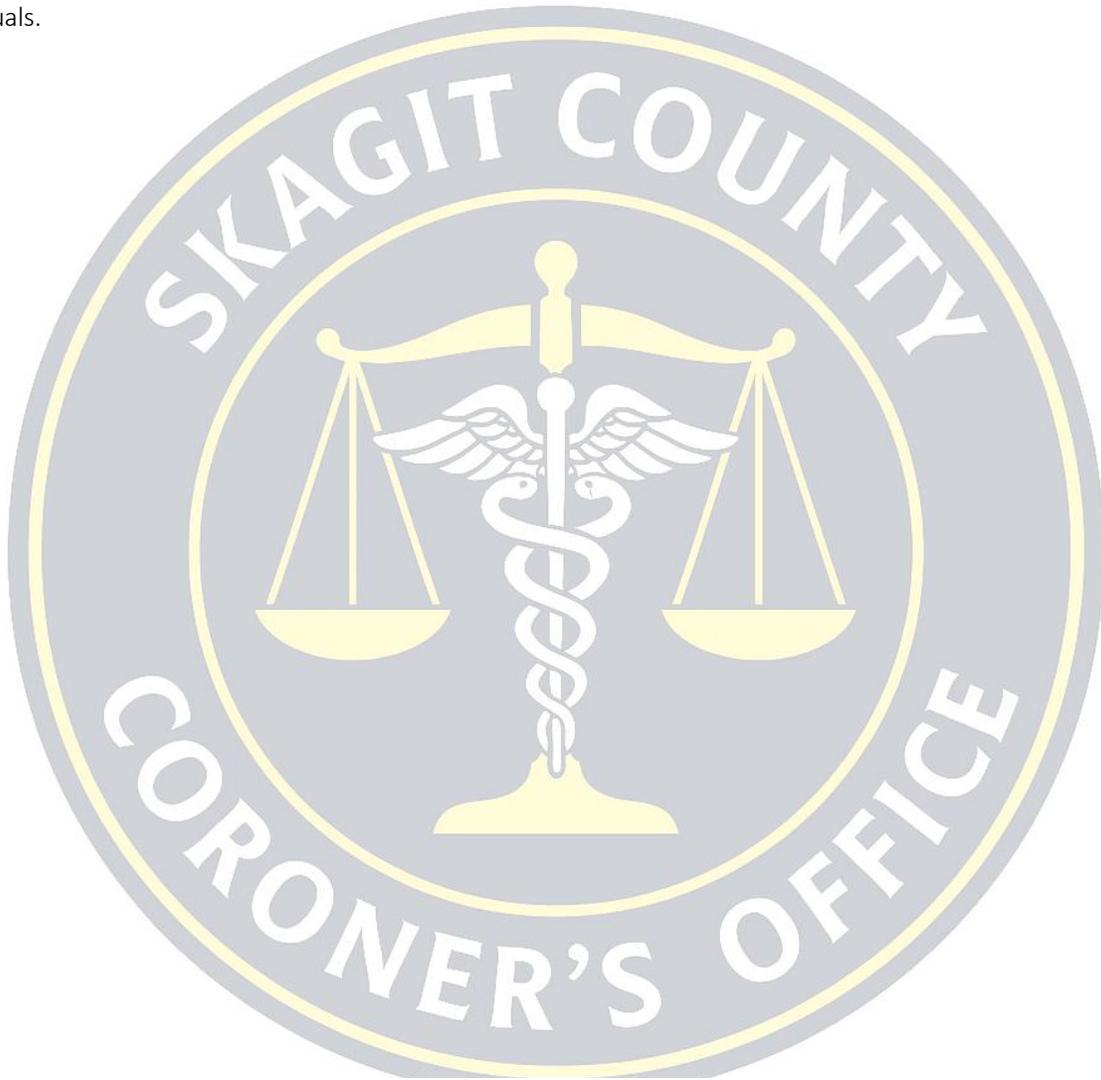
Body Examination Policy

Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for the examination of decedents at the scene of death, ensuring investigative integrity, legal compliance, and preservation of evidence.

Scope

Applies to all Coroner’s Office personnel conducting or assisting with scene investigations involving deceased individuals.



Date Implemented ***Date Revised***

02/24/2017	08/28/2017
	07/14/2022
	11/8/2024
	09/8/2025

Body Release Form and Tracking Policy

Purpose

To ensure accurate documentation, secure tracking, and lawful release of decedents from Coroner custody using standardized MDI log entries and interoperable data systems.

Scope

A Body Release Form will be completed in MDI log whenever the body is in the custody of the Coroner’s Office.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

06/20/2019	07/08/2022
------------	------------

	12/04/2024
--	------------

	09/08/2025
--	------------

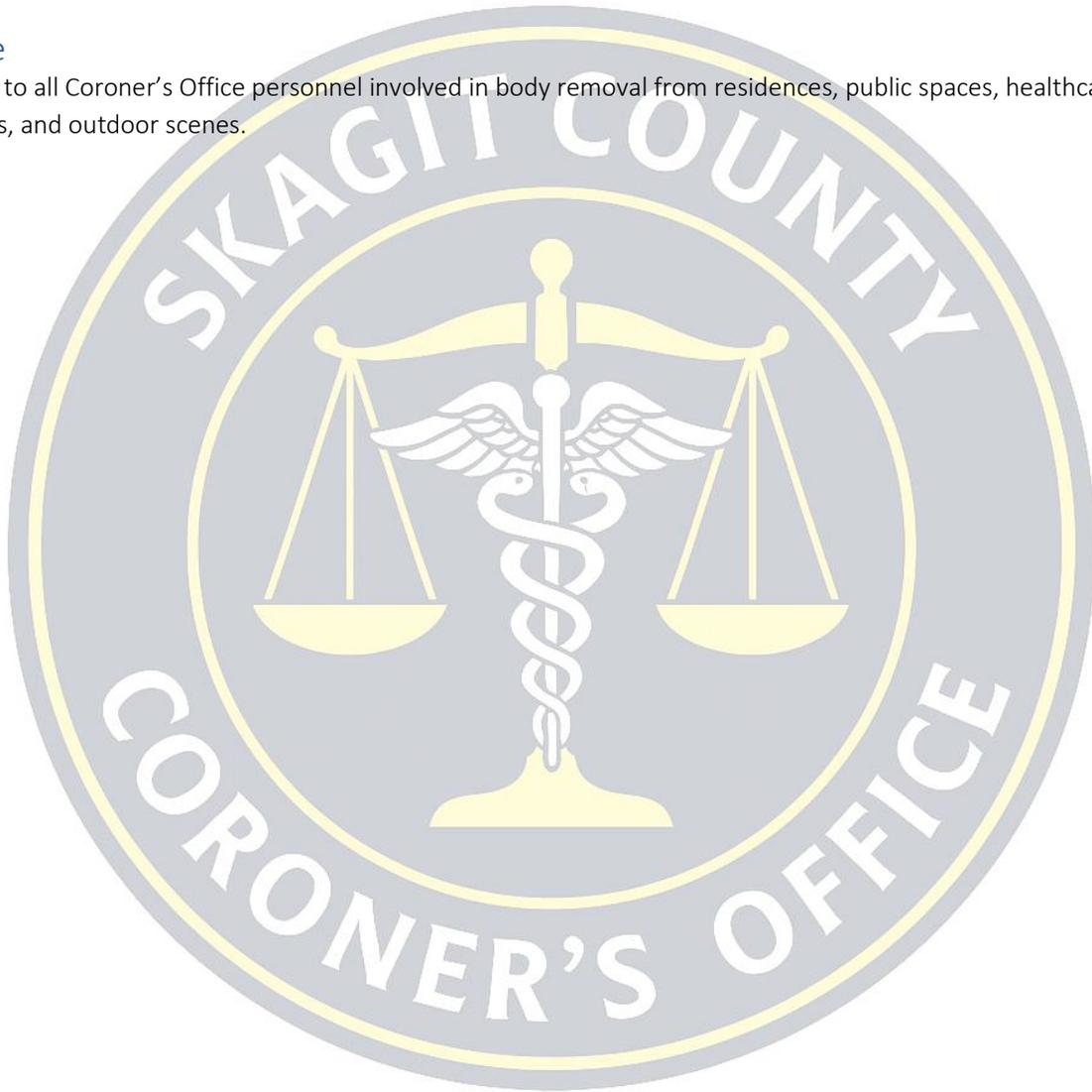
Body Removal Policy

Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for the lawful, safe, and respectful removal of deceased individuals from death scenes under the jurisdiction of the Coroner’s Office.

Scope

Applies to all Coroner’s Office personnel involved in body removal from residences, public spaces, healthcare facilities, and outdoor scenes.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	----------------------	---------------------

03/08/2017	11/8/2024	10/17/2025
------------	-----------	------------

Body Disposition, Transport, and Property Handling Policy

Purpose

This policy establishes procedures for body disposition, transport, and handling of medications, illicit substances, and personal property during death investigations conducted by the Skagit County Coroner’s Office. It ensures compliance with legal standards, preservation of evidence, and respectful treatment of decedents and their belongings.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/27/2017	07/14/2022
------------	------------

	11/08/2024
--	------------

	10/17/2025
--	------------

Case Numbering System Policy

Policy:

The Skagit County Coroner’s Office uses MDI Log for its case management system. When a death is reported to the Skagit County Coroner’s Office, a unique case file number is assigned to the case and the information regarding the death is entered into a relational database under the assigned case file number. This numbering system will include all Coroner and Non-Jurisdiction Assumed (NJA) Cases.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
02/24/2017	11/8/2024	07/08/2022
	10/17/2025	

Chain of Custody Policy

Policy:

All items obtained from the scene—whether classified as property or evidence—must be documented in the MDI Log under the Property/Evidence section. Each item shall be sealed in an integrity bag, with the investigator or autopsy technician who collected the item clearly initialing and dating the seal.

- All property and evidence will be secured in a designated storage locker within the autopsy suite until released to the appropriate agency or authorized representative.
- Upon release, the receiving agency or representative must sign for the item in the MDI Log to formally document the chain of custody.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/24/2017

07/14/2022

11/8/2024

10/17/2025

Contagious Disease Reporting Policy

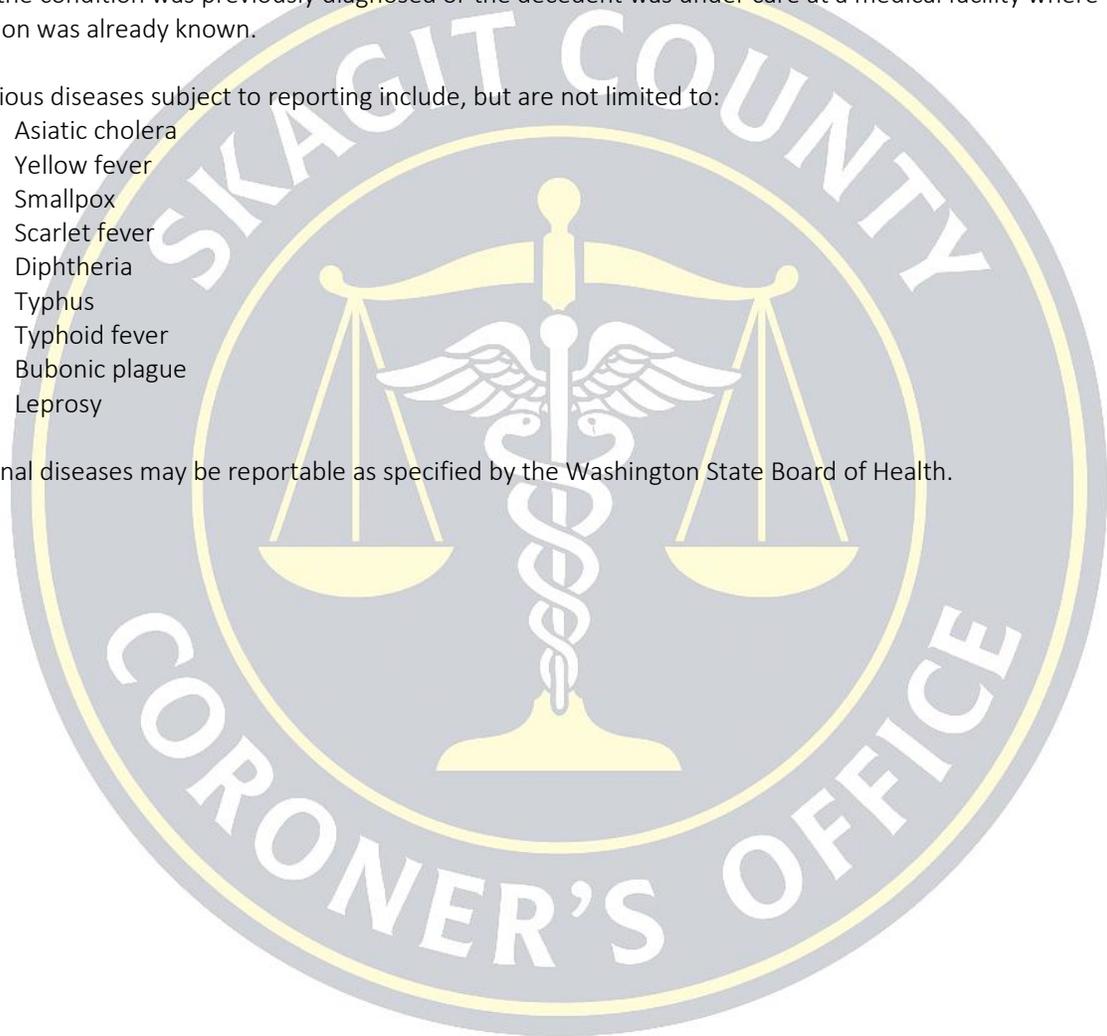
Policy: Reporting Contagious Diseases

The Skagit County Coroner’s Office is committed to protecting public health by promptly reporting contagious diseases associated with deaths under its jurisdiction. In accordance with RCW 70.05.110, the Coroner’s Office will notify the Skagit County Public Health Office immediately upon identifying a death involving a contagious disease, unless the condition was previously diagnosed or the decedent was under care at a medical facility where the contagion was already known.

Contagious diseases subject to reporting include, but are not limited to:

- Asiatic cholera
- Yellow fever
- Smallpox
- Scarlet fever
- Diphtheria
- Typhus
- Typhoid fever
- Bubonic plague
- Leprosy

Additional diseases may be reportable as specified by the Washington State Board of Health.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
02/24/2017	07/14/2022	10/17/2025
	11/8/2024	
	10/17/2025	

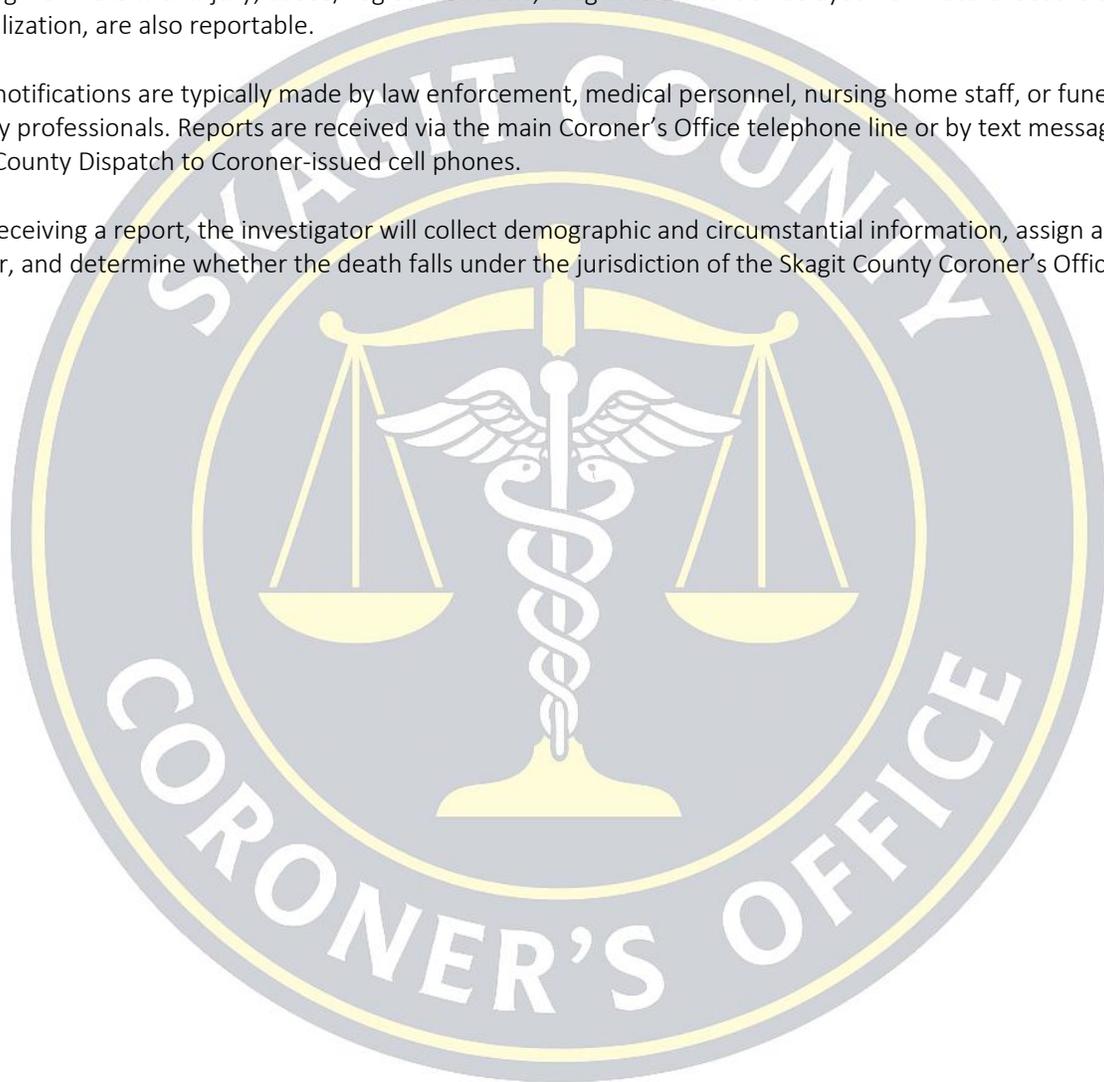
Death Notification Policy

Policy: Reporting Deaths to the Skagit County Coroner’s Office

All deaths must be reported to the Skagit County Coroner’s Office immediately to determine jurisdiction. Generally, deaths that occur outside of medical health care facilities—such as hospitals, nursing homes, and hospice care—must be reported. Additionally, certain deaths that occur within medical facilities, including those resulting from falls with injury, abuse/neglect concerns, drug involvement or delayed non-natural deaths during hospitalization, are also reportable.

Death notifications are typically made by law enforcement, medical personnel, nursing home staff, or funeral industry professionals. Reports are received via the main Coroner’s Office telephone line or by text message from Skagit County Dispatch to Coroner-issued cell phones.

Upon receiving a report, the investigator will collect demographic and circumstantial information, assign a case number, and determine whether the death falls under the jurisdiction of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
02/24/2017	11/8/2024	07/14/2022
	11/8/2024	10/8/2025

Death Scene Investigation and Response Policy

Policy: Death Investigation and Scene Response

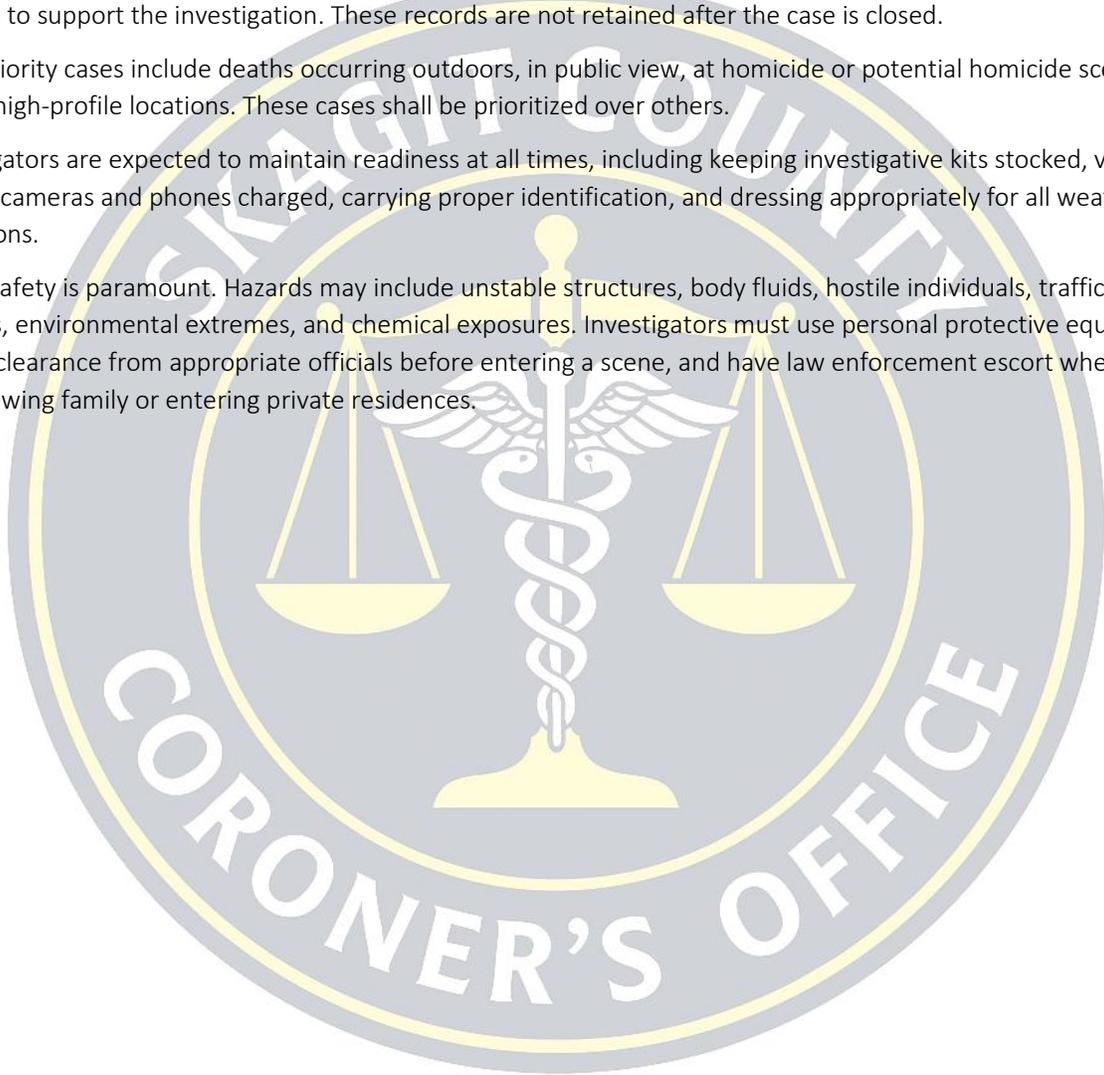
All deaths reported to the Skagit County Coroner’s Office shall be thoroughly investigated to determine jurisdiction and, when applicable, to assist in certifying the cause and manner of death. Coroner cases requiring investigation are defined in accordance with RCW 68.50.010.

The Skagit County Coroner’s Office conducts independent investigations, separate from law enforcement or other agencies. Investigators routinely obtain law enforcement reports, first responder documentation, and medical records to support the investigation. These records are not retained after the case is closed.

High-priority cases include deaths occurring outdoors, in public view, at homicide or potential homicide scenes, and at high-profile locations. These cases shall be prioritized over others.

Investigators are expected to maintain readiness at all times, including keeping investigative kits stocked, vehicles fueled, cameras and phones charged, carrying proper identification, and dressing appropriately for all weather conditions.

Scene safety is paramount. Hazards may include unstable structures, body fluids, hostile individuals, traffic, animals, environmental extremes, and chemical exposures. Investigators must use personal protective equipment, obtain clearance from appropriate officials before entering a scene, and have law enforcement escort when interviewing family or entering private residences.



Date Implemented ***Date Revised***

02/24/2017	07/14/2022
	11/8/2024
	10/17/2025

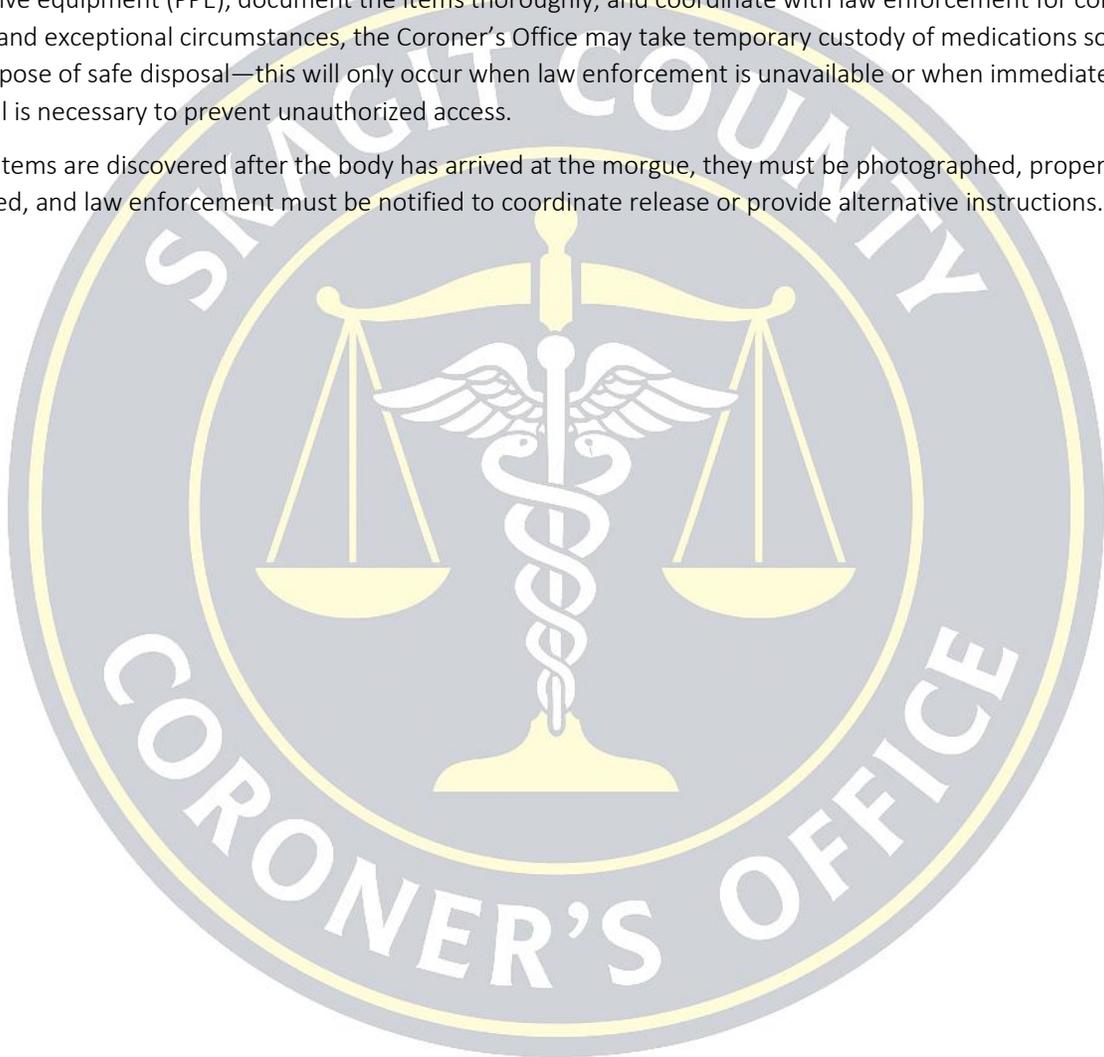
Handling of Drugs, Medications, and Paraphernalia Policy

Policy: Handling of Medications, Drugs, and Paraphernalia

The Skagit County Coroner’s Office does not routinely accept or take custody of any medications, drugs (prescription or illicit), or drug paraphernalia from the scene of a death or from any agency involved in the death investigation. These items are the responsibility of law enforcement and must be collected for evidentiary purposes or destruction.

When medications, drugs, or paraphernalia are present at a scene, investigators must use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), document the items thoroughly, and coordinate with law enforcement for collection. In rare and exceptional circumstances, the Coroner’s Office may take temporary custody of medications solely for the purpose of safe disposal—this will only occur when law enforcement is unavailable or when immediate removal is necessary to prevent unauthorized access.

If such items are discovered after the body has arrived at the morgue, they must be photographed, properly packaged, and law enforcement must be notified to coordinate release or provide alternative instructions.



Date Implemented ***Date Revised***

02/24/2017	07/14/2022
	11/8/2024
	10/8/2025

Establishing Cause and Manner of Death Policy

The *cause* of death is the specific disease or injury that leads to the death.

The *manner* of death is the determination of how the disease or injury leads to the death.

Medicolegal classification of the manner of death is mainly for statistical purposes.

The manner of death stated on the death certificate is to clarify circumstances of death and how an injury was sustained. The manner of death has no direct bearing on criminal prosecution or insurance settlements.

The determination as to the Manner of Death by the Skagit County Coroner's Office is based on *the National Association of Medical Examiners: A Guide for Manner of Death Guidelines, First Edition, 2002.*

<https://name.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/MANNEROFDEATH.pdf>.

Per the National Association of Medical Examiners:

- *Manner of death certifications should be objective and based on simple, established criteria.*
- *Manner of death SHOULD NOT BE formulated to facilitate prosecution, avoid challenging publicity, build a political base, or promote a personal philosophy or agenda.*

The classifications for Manner of Death are:

Natural

- Is defined as a death caused solely by disease and/or the aging process.

Accident

- Applies when an injury or poisoning causes death and there is little or no evidence that the injury or poisoning occurred with intent to harm or cause death. The fatal outcome was unintentional.
- Per the National Association of Medical Examiners: A Guide for Manner of Death Guidelines, First Edition, 2002:
 - *“Unintentional deaths from drug toxicity/poisoning in which the drug is administered by someone with the consent of the decedent may be classified as **Accident**, as long as there is no evidence by reasonable investigative inference that the drug was given with the intent to kill the victim. Prosecution may still occur, if appropriate. This approach may seem inconsistent with some other scenarios, but it is reasonable on the basis that severe injury or death is not near as likely as, for example, when a loaded gun is placed to the head and the trigger is pulled.”*

Suicide

- Results from an injury or poisoning as a result of an intentional, self-inflicted act committed to do self-harm or cause the death of one's self.

Homicide

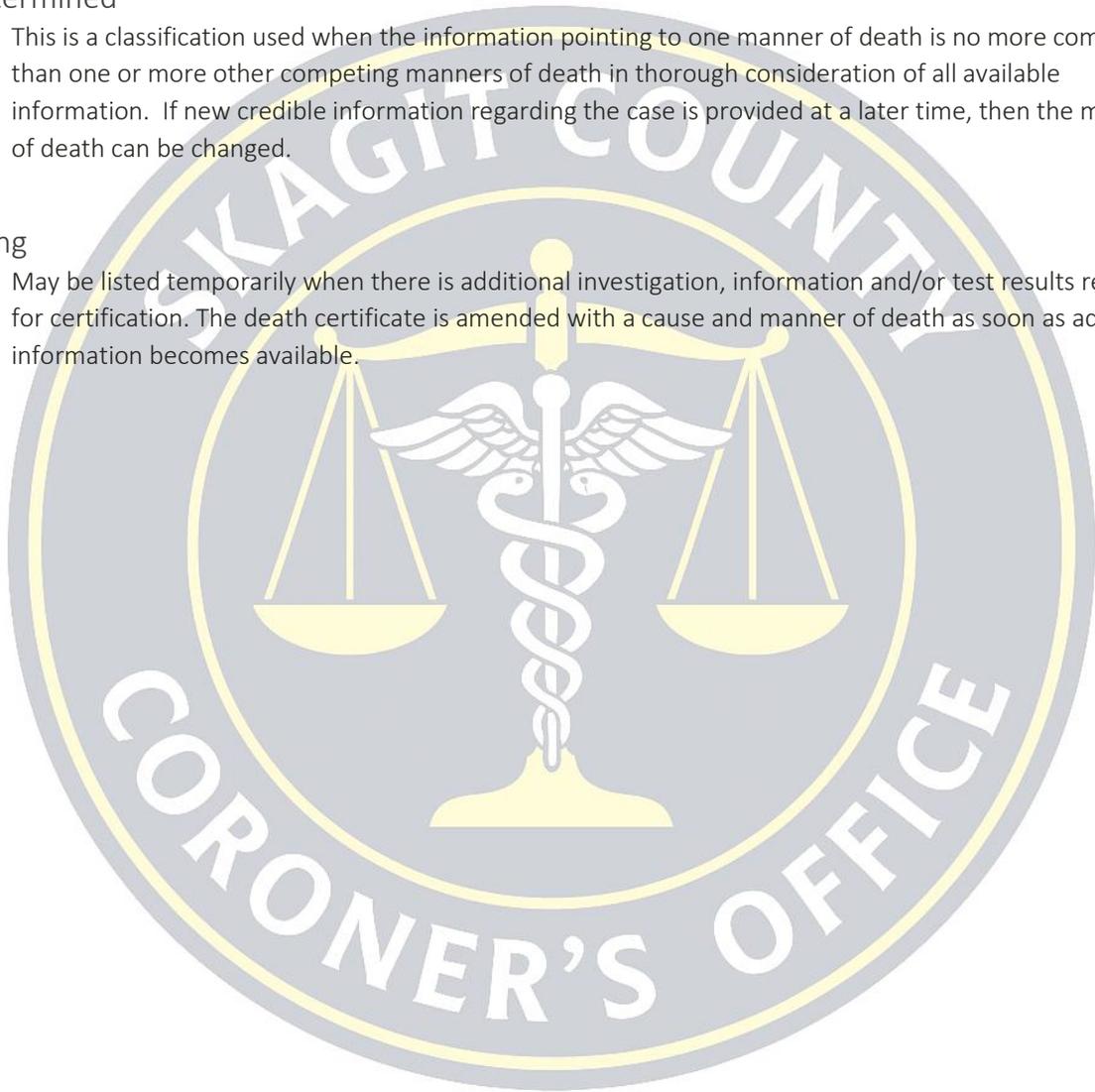
- When death results from a volitional act committed by another person to cause fear, harm, or death. This may also include willful neglect. Intent to cause death is a common element, but not required for classification of homicide. Homicide for the purposes of the death certificate is a “neutral” term and neither indicates nor implies *criminal* intent, which remains a determination within the province of legal processes.

Undetermined

- This is a classification used when the information pointing to one manner of death is no more compelling than one or more other competing manners of death in thorough consideration of all available information. If new credible information regarding the case is provided at a later time, then the manner of death can be changed.

Pending

- May be listed temporarily when there is additional investigation, information and/or test results required for certification. The death certificate is amended with a cause and manner of death as soon as additional information becomes available.



Date Implemented ***Date Reviewed***

12/03/2024

11/8/2024

10/13/2025

Fetal Demise Policy

Purpose

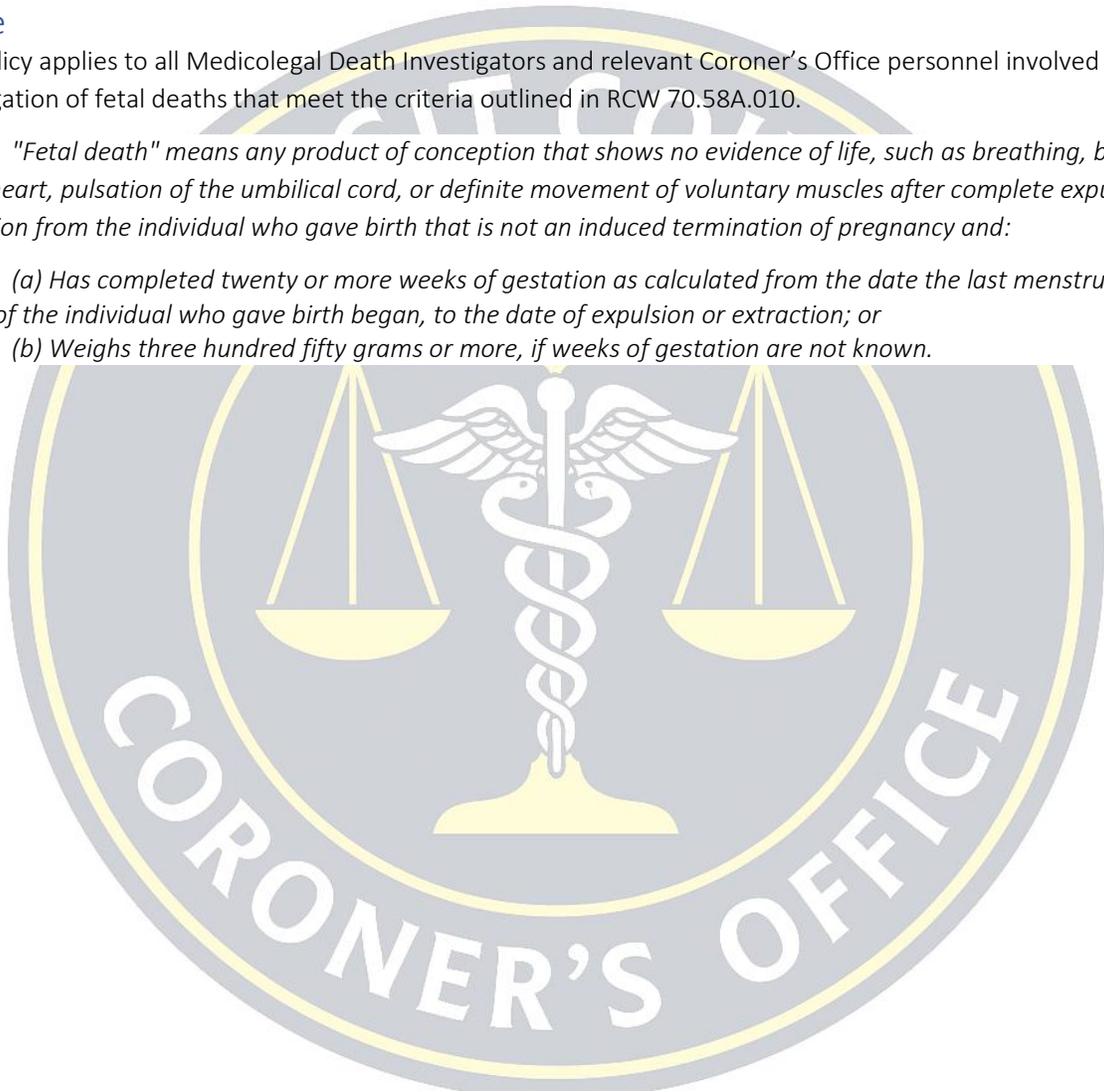
To establish standardized procedures for investigating fetal deaths in accordance with Washington State law RCW 70.58A.010, ensuring consistent documentation, appropriate jurisdictional decisions, and thorough case management by the Coroner’s Office.

Scope

This policy applies to all Medicolegal Death Investigators and relevant Coroner’s Office personnel involved in the investigation of fetal deaths that meet the criteria outlined in RCW 70.58A.010.

"Fetal death" means any product of conception that shows no evidence of life, such as breathing, beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or definite movement of voluntary muscles after complete expulsion or extraction from the individual who gave birth that is not an induced termination of pregnancy and:

- (a) Has completed twenty or more weeks of gestation as calculated from the date the last menstrual period of the individual who gave birth began, to the date of expulsion or extraction; or*
- (b) Weighs three hundred fifty grams or more, if weeks of gestation are not known.*



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/24/2017	08/3/2022
	12/14/2023
	11/12/2024
	10/15/2025

Handling and Disposition of Deceased Animals at Scenes Policy

Purpose

To establish a respectful and consistent protocol for handling deceased animals found at death scenes when law enforcement does not arrange removal.

Scope

This policy applies to all Coroner staff responding to death scenes where a deceased pet is present, either indoors or outdoors.

Policy Statement

When a deceased animal is found at a death scene and law enforcement has not made arrangements for removal, the Skagit County Coroner’s Office will take appropriate steps to ensure the animal is respectfully handled and properly disposed of.



Date Implemented ***Date Revised***

11/21/2024	10/17/2025
------------	------------

Hazardous Chemicals Policy

Purpose

To ensure that all employees of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office are informed about the hazards associated with chemicals used in the workplace and that the agency complies with the OSHA Hazard Communication Standard.

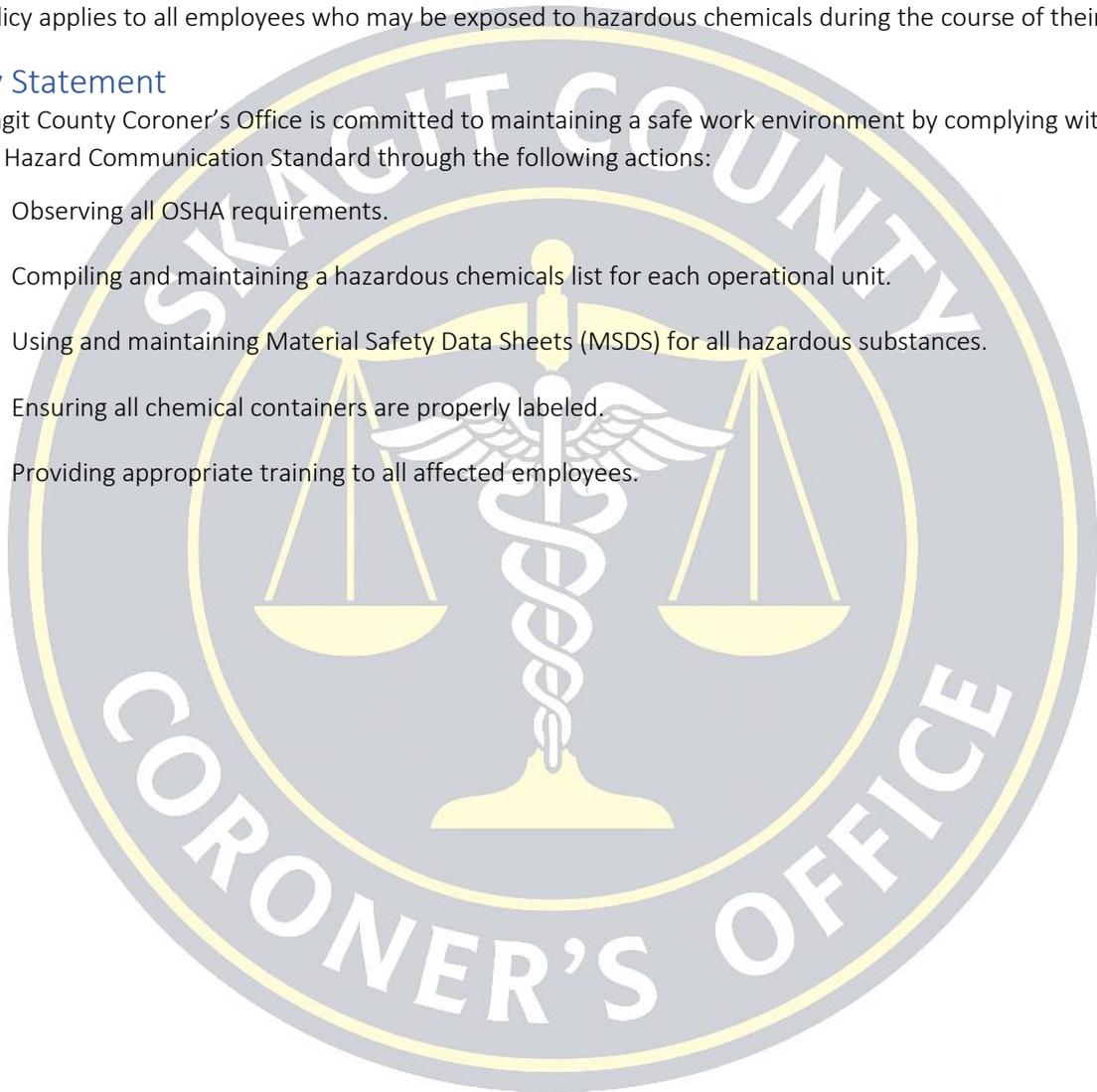
Scope

This policy applies to all employees who may be exposed to hazardous chemicals during the course of their duties.

Policy Statement

The Skagit County Coroner’s Office is committed to maintaining a safe work environment by complying with OSHA’s Hazard Communication Standard through the following actions:

- Observing all OSHA requirements.
- Compiling and maintaining a hazardous chemicals list for each operational unit.
- Using and maintaining Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for all hazardous substances.
- Ensuring all chemical containers are properly labeled.
- Providing appropriate training to all affected employees.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	----------------------	---------------------

07/14/2022	11/8/2024	10/17/2025
------------	-----------	------------

Identification Policy

Purpose

To establish a consistent and legally compliant process for identifying decedents under the jurisdiction of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office, ensuring accuracy, dignity, and adherence to **RCW 68.50.330**.

Scope

This policy applies to all Coroner investigators and staff involved in the identification and documentation of deceased individuals.



Date Implemented ***Date Revised***

02/24/2017	07/08/2022
	11/8/2024
	10/17/2025

Infant and Child Death Investigations Policy

Purpose

To ensure a thorough, compassionate, and standardized investigation of all sudden and unexpected infant deaths under the jurisdiction of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office, in accordance with CDC and SUIDI guidelines.

Scope

This policy applies to all Coroner staff and investigators responding to infant death scenes, including deaths occurring at home, in medical facilities, or other locations.



Date Implemented ***Date Revised***

03/08/2017	11/8/2024
	10/17/2025

Jurisdiction Policy

Purpose

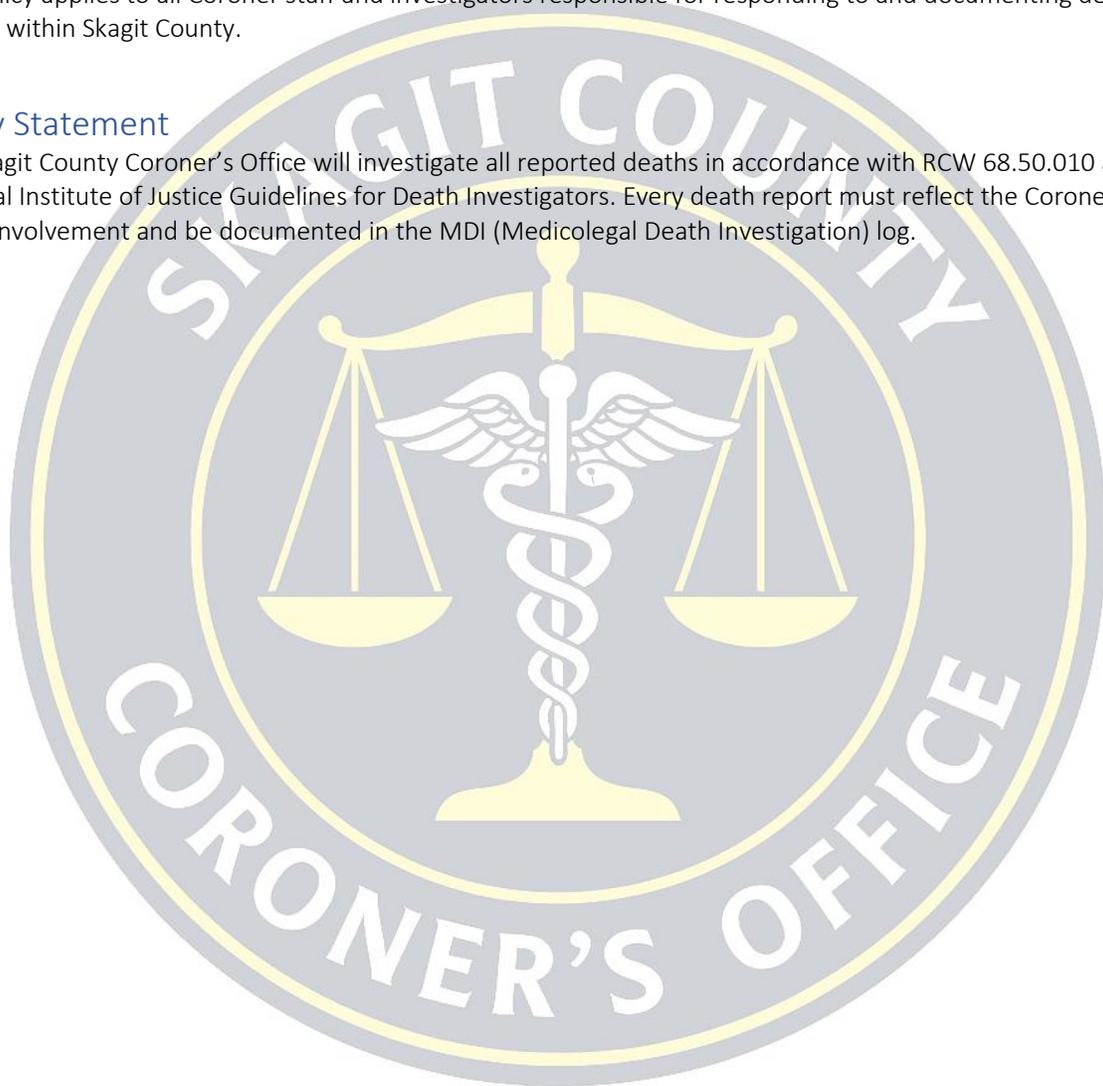
To ensure that all deaths reported to the Skagit County Coroner’s Office are thoroughly investigated to determine jurisdiction and, when applicable, to assist in certifying the cause and manner of death.

Scope

This policy applies to all Coroner staff and investigators responsible for responding to and documenting death reports within Skagit County.

Policy Statement

The Skagit County Coroner’s Office will investigate all reported deaths in accordance with RCW 68.50.010 and the National Institute of Justice Guidelines for Death Investigators. Every death report must reflect the Coroner’s Office involvement and be documented in the MDI (Medicolegal Death Investigation) log.



Date Implemented ***Date Revised***

02/24/2017	07/8/2022
	12/03/2024
	10/17/2025

Mass Fatality Policy

Purpose

To establish a structured and coordinated response protocol for mass fatality disasters that exceed the routine capabilities of the community, ensuring safety, legal compliance, and compassionate care for victims and families.

Scope

This policy applies to all Coroner staff and affiliated agencies responding to mass fatality events within Skagit County.

Definition

A **Mass Fatality Disaster** is defined as an occurrence of multiple deaths that overwhelms the usual routine capabilities of the community.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
03/08/2017	07/18/2022	10/17/2025
	11/14/2023	
	11/8/2024	

Next of Kin and Claiming of Human Remains Policy

Purpose

To establish clear guidelines for the identification and notification of legal next of kin in cases where the Skagit County Coroner’s Office assumes jurisdiction, in accordance with **RCW 68.50.300 and RCW 68.50.010**.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff involved in death investigations, notifications, and disposition coordination within the Skagit County Coroner’s Office.

RCW 68.50.300
Release of information concerning a death.

(1) The county coroner, medical examiner, or prosecuting attorney having jurisdiction may in such official's discretion release information concerning a person's death to the media and general public, in order to aid in identifying the deceased, when the identity of the deceased is unknown to the official and when he or she does not know the information to be readily available through other sources.

(2)(a) The county coroner, medical examiner, or prosecuting attorney may withhold any information which directly or indirectly identifies a decedent until either:

- (i) A notification period of forty-eight hours has elapsed after identification of the decedent by such official; or
- (ii) The next of kin of the decedent has been notified.

(b) During the forty-eight hour notification period, such official shall make a good faith attempt to locate and notify the next of kin of the decedent.

(3) The county coroner, medical examiner, or prosecuting attorney having jurisdiction may release information contained in a report of death, as defined in chapter [70.58A](#) RCW, to the media and general public.

RCW 68.50.010
Coroner's jurisdiction over remains.

The jurisdiction of bodies of all deceased persons who come to their death suddenly when in apparent good health without medical attendance within the 36 hours preceding death; or where the circumstances of death indicate death was caused by unnatural or unlawful means; or where death occurs under suspicious circumstances; or where a coroner's autopsy or postmortem or coroner's inquest is to be held; or where death results from unknown or obscure causes, or where death occurs within one year following an accident; or where the death is caused by any violence whatsoever, whether self-induced or otherwise; where death apparently results from drowning, hanging, burns, electrocution, gunshot wounds, stabs or cuts, lightning, starvation, radiation, exposure, alcoholism, narcotics or other addictions, tetanus, strangulations, suffocation or smothering; or where death is due to a violent contagious disease or suspected contagious disease which may be a public health hazard; or where death results from alleged rape, carnal knowledge or sodomy, where death occurs in a jail or prison; where a body is found dead or is not claimed by relatives or friends, is hereby vested in the county coroner or medical examiner, which bodies may be removed and placed in the morgue under such rules as are adopted by the coroner or medical examiner with the approval of the county commissioners, having jurisdiction, providing therein how the bodies shall be brought to and cared for at the morgue and held for the proper identification where necessary.

Date Implemented ***Date Revised***

02/24/2017

7/14/2022

11/8/2024

10/13/2025

Photography Policy

Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for the documentation, handling, and storage of photographs taken during death investigations conducted by the Skagit County Coroner’s Office.

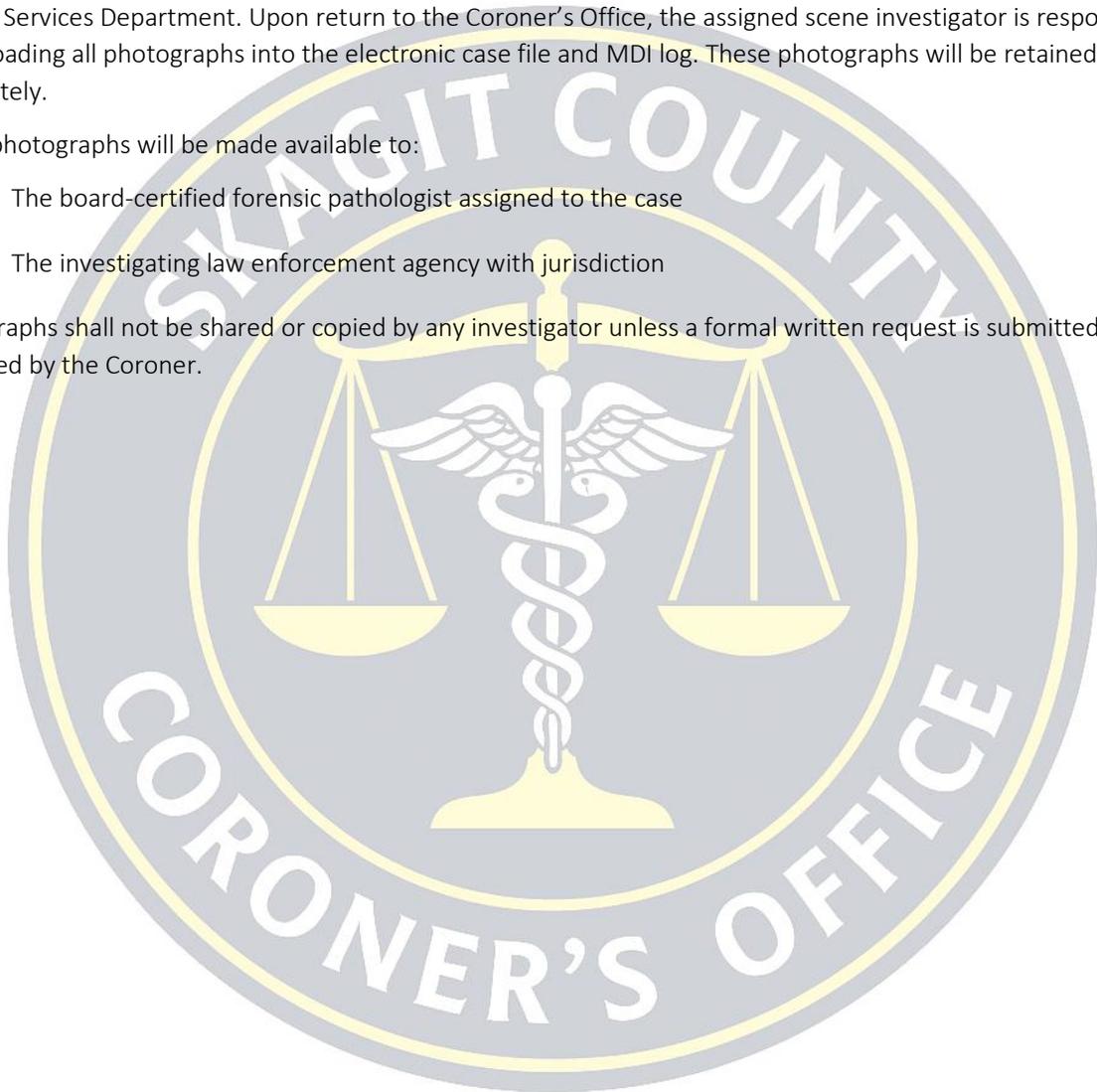
Policy Statement

All photographs taken by the Coroner’s Office shall be electronically backed up off-site by the Skagit County Central Services Department. Upon return to the Coroner’s Office, the assigned scene investigator is responsible for uploading all photographs into the electronic case file and MDI log. These photographs will be retained indefinitely.

Scene photographs will be made available to:

- The board-certified forensic pathologist assigned to the case
- The investigating law enforcement agency with jurisdiction

Photographs shall not be shared or copied by any investigator unless a formal written request is submitted to and approved by the Coroner.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/24/2017	7/14/2022
	11/8/2024
	10/17/2025

Personal Property Handling and Disposition Policy

Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for the inventory, documentation, storage, and release of personal property associated with decedents in accordance with RCW 68.50.040, RCW 68.50.160, and RCW 36.24.130.

Policy Statement

All jewelry, money, papers, and other personal property of the deceased shall be inventoried immediately upon being taken into custody by the Coroner or their appointees. The original inventory list shall be certified by the Coroner and maintained as a public record at the county morgue.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/24/2017	7/14/2022
------------	-----------

	11/8/2024
--	-----------

	07/01/2025
--	------------

	10/14/2025
--	------------

Scene Investigation and Documentation Policy

Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for photographing and documenting death scenes to ensure the creation of a permanent historical record, corroborating evidence, and investigative redundancy.

Scope

This policy applies to all responding investigators involved in death scene investigations, both indoor and outdoor, and outlines expectations for safety, documentation, and photographic procedures.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/24/2017	7/14/2022
	11/8/2024
	10/15/2025

Sudden Unexplained Infant Death Investigations (SUIDI) Policy

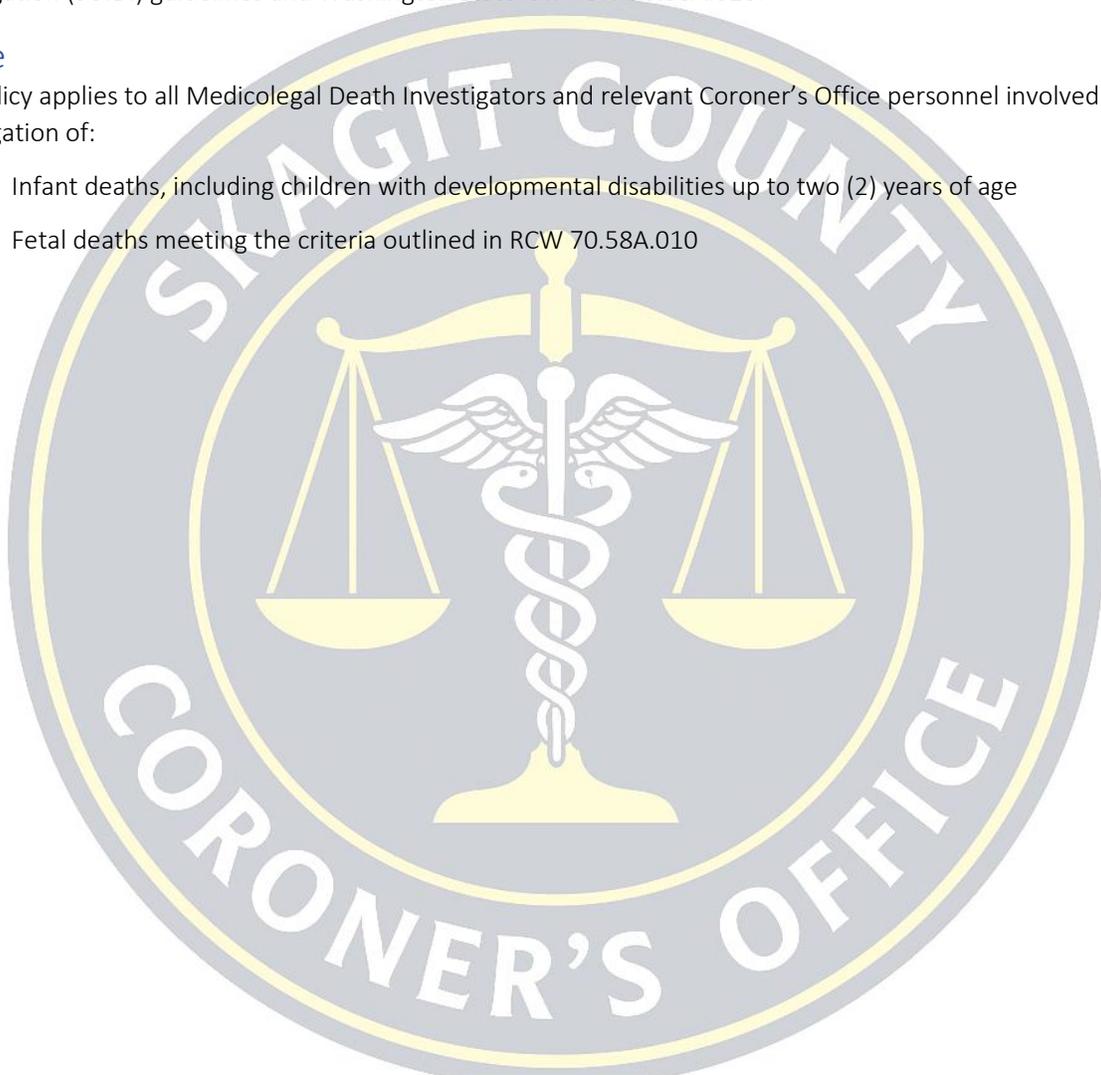
Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for investigating infant and fetal deaths that lack an immediately apparent cause, in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Sudden Unexplained Infant Death Investigation (SUIDI) guidelines and Washington State law RCW 70.58A.010.

Scope

This policy applies to all Medicolegal Death Investigators and relevant Coroner’s Office personnel involved in the investigation of:

- Infant deaths, including children with developmental disabilities up to two (2) years of age
- Fetal deaths meeting the criteria outlined in RCW 70.58A.010



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
02/24/2017	8/3/2022
	12/14/2023
	11/12/2024
	10/15/2025

Tissue and Organ Donation Coordination Policy

Purpose

To establish procedures for coordinating organ and tissue donation requests in accordance with medicolegal standards and the Skagit County Coroner’s commitment to supporting transplantation efforts.

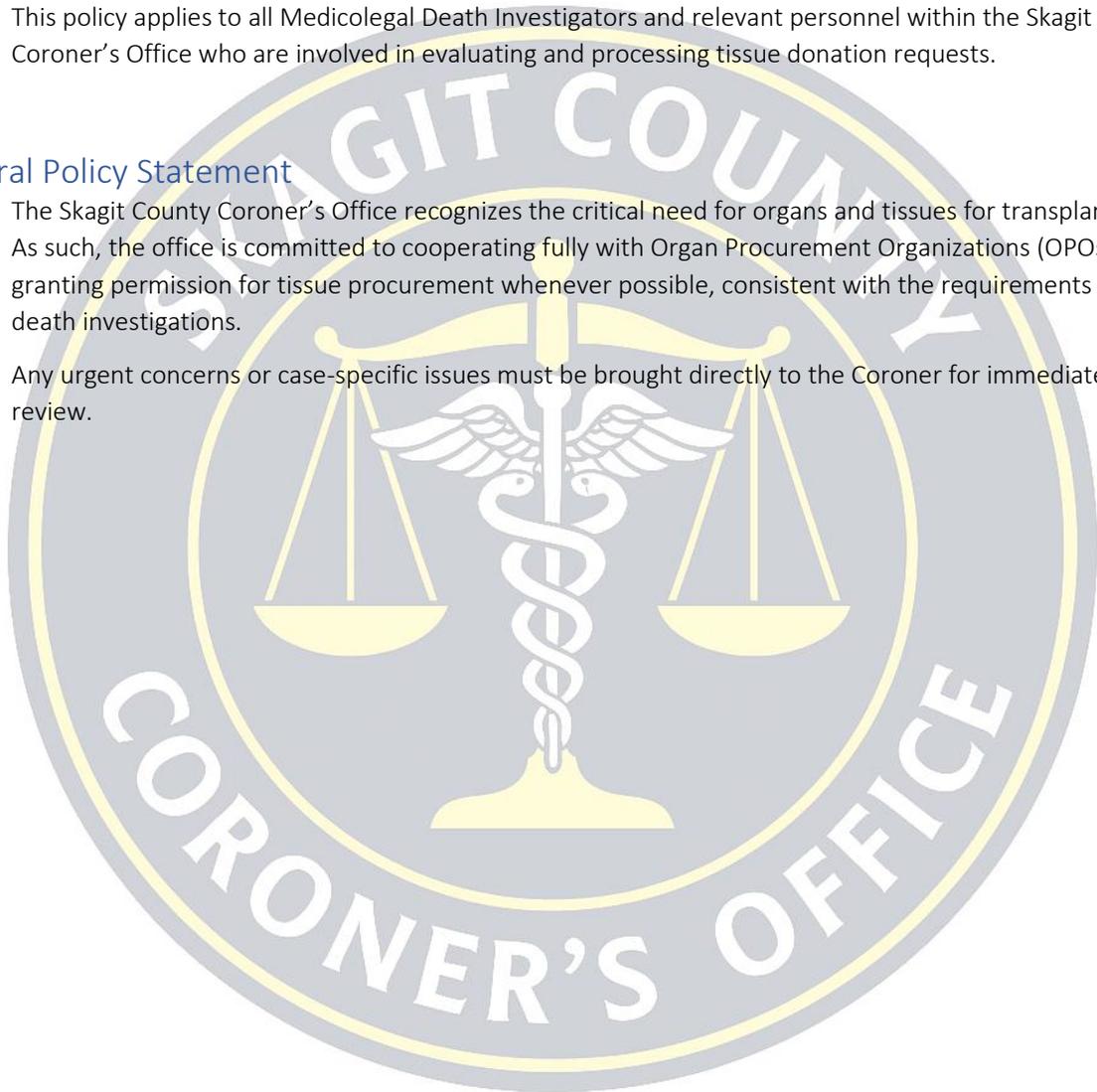
Scope

This policy applies to all Medicolegal Death Investigators and relevant personnel within the Skagit County Coroner’s Office who are involved in evaluating and processing tissue donation requests.

General Policy Statement

The Skagit County Coroner’s Office recognizes the critical need for organs and tissues for transplantation. As such, the office is committed to cooperating fully with Organ Procurement Organizations (OPOs) and granting permission for tissue procurement whenever possible, consistent with the requirements of death investigations.

Any urgent concerns or case-specific issues must be brought directly to the Coroner for immediate review.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/24/2017	7/14/2022
------------	-----------

	11/8/2024
--	-----------

	10/15/2025
--	------------

Toxicology Specimen Collection and Submission Policy

Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for the collection, documentation, and submission of toxicology specimens in all relevant death investigations conducted by the Skagit County Coroner’s Office.

Scope

This policy applies to all Medicolegal Death Investigators and authorized personnel responsible for conducting examinations and collecting toxicology specimens in cases under the jurisdiction of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

07/14/2022	11/18/2024
------------	------------

	10/15/2025
--	------------

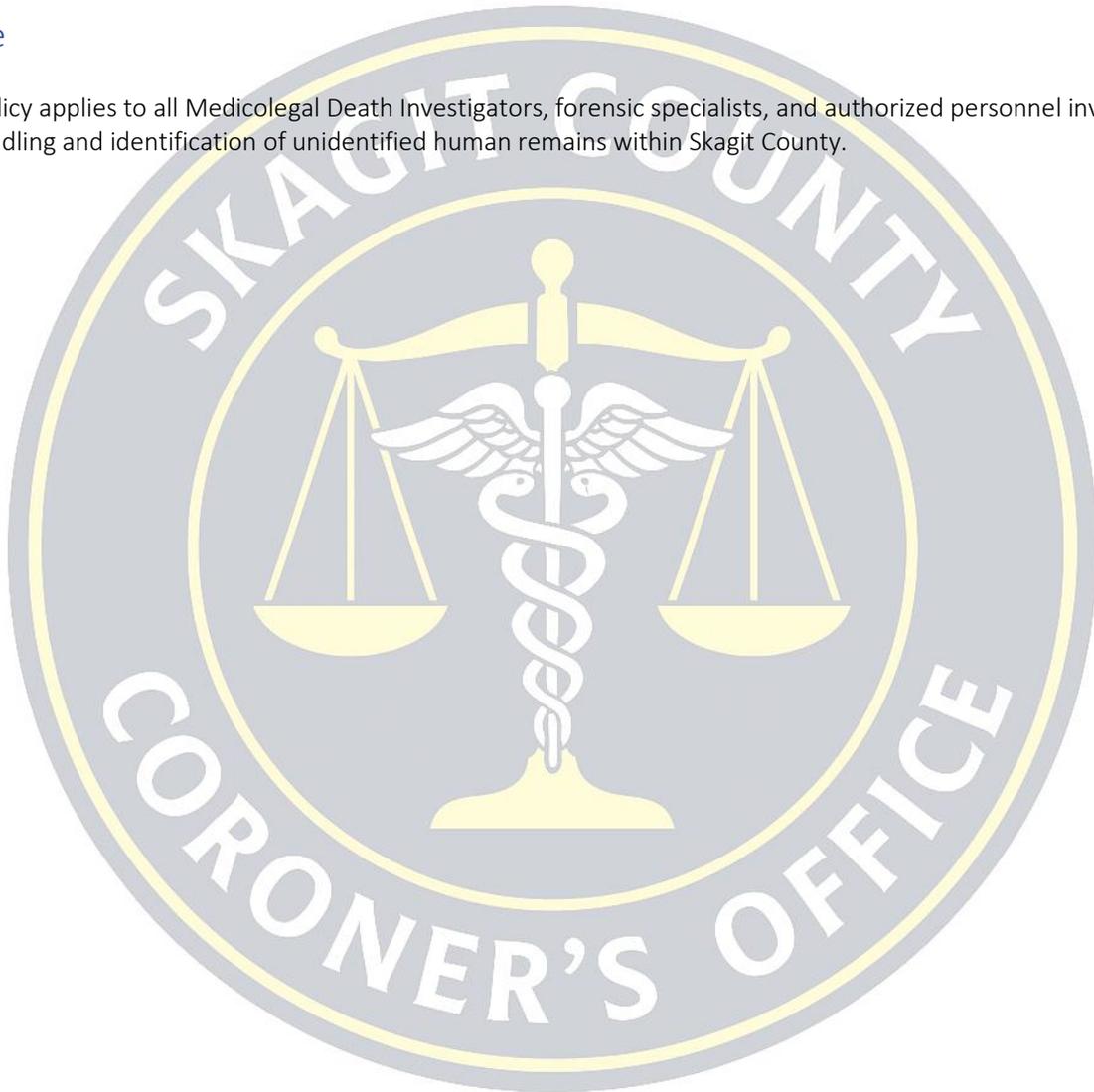
Investigation and Identification of Unidentified Bodies Policy

Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for the examination, documentation, and identification of unidentified bodies under the jurisdiction of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office, in accordance with RCW 68.50.330 and national best practices.

Scope

This policy applies to all Medicolegal Death Investigators, forensic specialists, and authorized personnel involved in the handling and identification of unidentified human remains within Skagit County.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/24/2017	7/08/2022
	11/8/2024
	10/15/2025

Requests, Records, and Media Policies



Requests for Autopsy Policy

Purpose

To define the criteria under which the Skagit County Coroner’s Office may authorize and perform an autopsy, ensuring that county resources are used appropriately and in accordance with Washington State law.

Policy Statement

Autopsies performed by the Skagit County Coroner’s Office must be supported by a valid forensic rationale. The expenditure of county funds for autopsy services requires that jurisdiction be properly established under RCW 68.50.010. Requests from family members, physicians, individuals, or special interest groups alone do not constitute sufficient grounds for jurisdiction or autopsy authorization.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

07/12/2022	11/11/2024
------------	------------

	10/13/2025
--	------------

Admonition Opposing Autopsy Policy

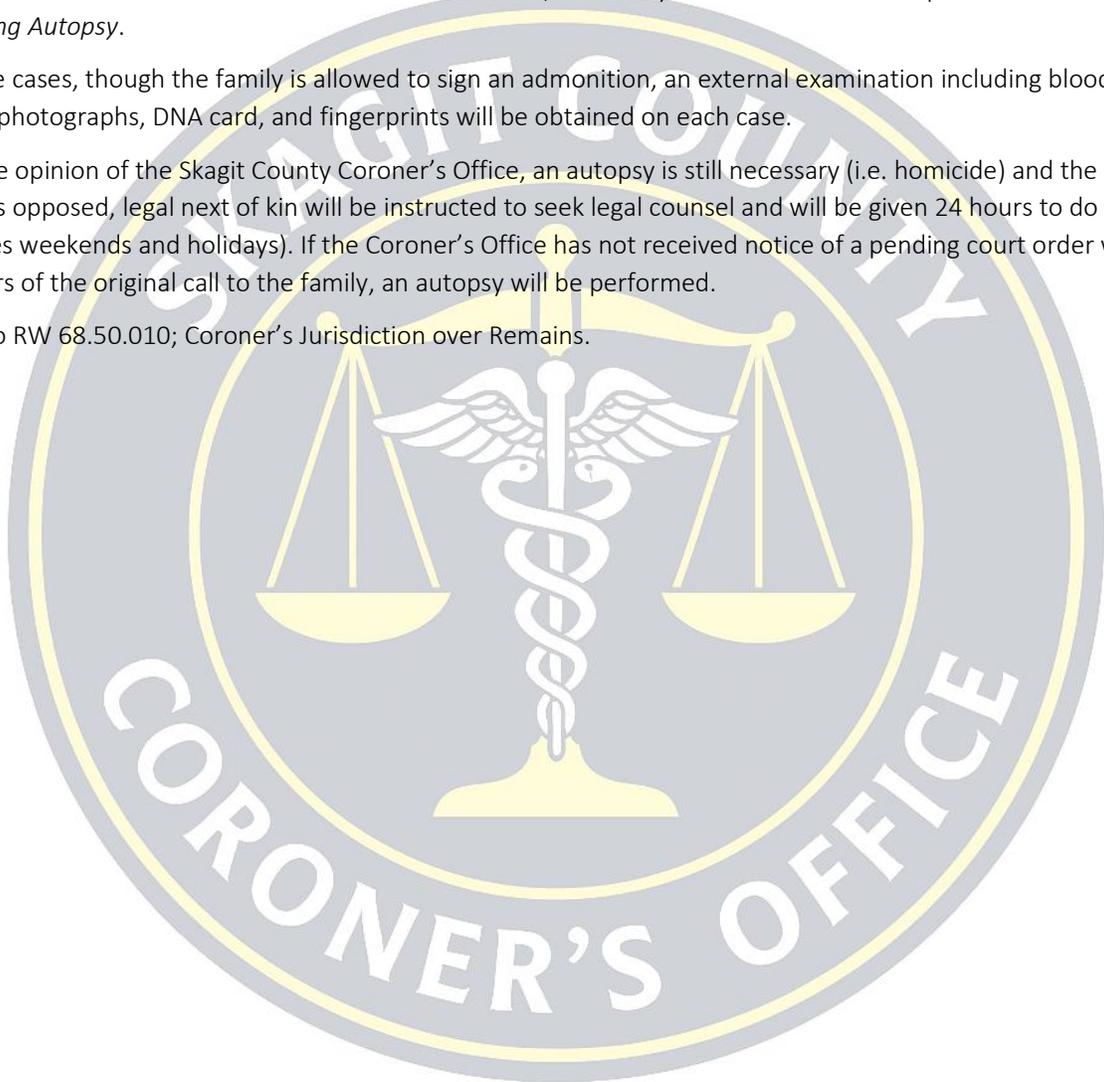
Policy:

According to Washington State law, in those cases that properly come under the authority of the Coroner’s Office, the Coroner’s office can perform autopsies, even without family consent. However, if a family is strongly opposed to autopsy for religious or other reasons (i.e. to avoid irreparable harm to the surviving next-of-kin), this fact will be taken into consideration. In these rare circumstances, the family will be allowed to complete an *Admonition Opposing Autopsy*.

In these cases, though the family is allowed to sign an admonition, an external examination including blood, urine draws, photographs, DNA card, and fingerprints will be obtained on each case.

If, in the opinion of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office, an autopsy is still necessary (i.e. homicide) and the family remains opposed, legal next of kin will be instructed to seek legal counsel and will be given 24 hours to do so (this excludes weekends and holidays). If the Coroner’s Office has not received notice of a pending court order within 24 hours of the original call to the family, an autopsy will be performed.

Refer to RW 68.50.010; Coroner’s Jurisdiction over Remains.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
02/24/2017	11/7/2024	7/14/2022
	09/08/2025	

Media Release Policy

Purpose

To establish guidelines for the release of death-related information to the media and general public, ensuring compliance with **RCW 68.50.300** and protection of decedent and family privacy.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff of the Skagit County Coroner’s Office involved in the communication of death-related information to external parties.

Policy Statement

Skagit County Coroner may release limited information about a decedent to the media or general public when:

- It is necessary to identify the deceased
- The death is related to an incident of public interest

ONLY THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION MAY BE RELEASED:

- Decedent’s name
- Age
- Date of death
- Cause of death
- Manner of death
- City of death

All other details are considered confidential and will not be disclosed.
The Coroners Office will make every reasonable effort to notify the legal next of kin prior to releasing any information to the public.

RCW 68.50.300

Release of information concerning a death.

(1) The county coroner, medical examiner, or prosecuting attorney having jurisdiction may in such official's discretion release information concerning a person's death to the media and general public, in order to aid in identifying the deceased, when the identity of the deceased is unknown to the official and when he or she does not know the information to be readily available through other sources.

(2)(a) The county coroner, medical examiner, or prosecuting attorney may withhold any information which directly or indirectly identifies a decedent until either:

- (i) A notification period of forty-eight hours has elapsed after identification of the decedent by such official; or
- (ii) The next of kin of the decedent has been notified.

(b) During the forty-eight hour notification period, such official shall make a good faith attempt to locate and notify the next of kin of the decedent.

(3) The county coroner, medical examiner, or prosecuting attorney having jurisdiction may release information contained in a report of death, as defined in chapter [70.58A](#) RCW, to the media and general public.

<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Reviewed</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
02/24/2017	11/8/2024	07/12/2022 10/17/2025

Quality Assurance Policy

Purpose

To ensure timely, accurate, and consistent completion, review, and archiving of all case files handled by the Skagit County Coroner’s Office.

Policy Statement

All case files must be completed, reviewed, and finalized in accordance with the following quality assurance procedures to maintain professional standards and compliance with office protocols.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/24/2017	7/14/2022
	11/8/2024
	11/14/2025

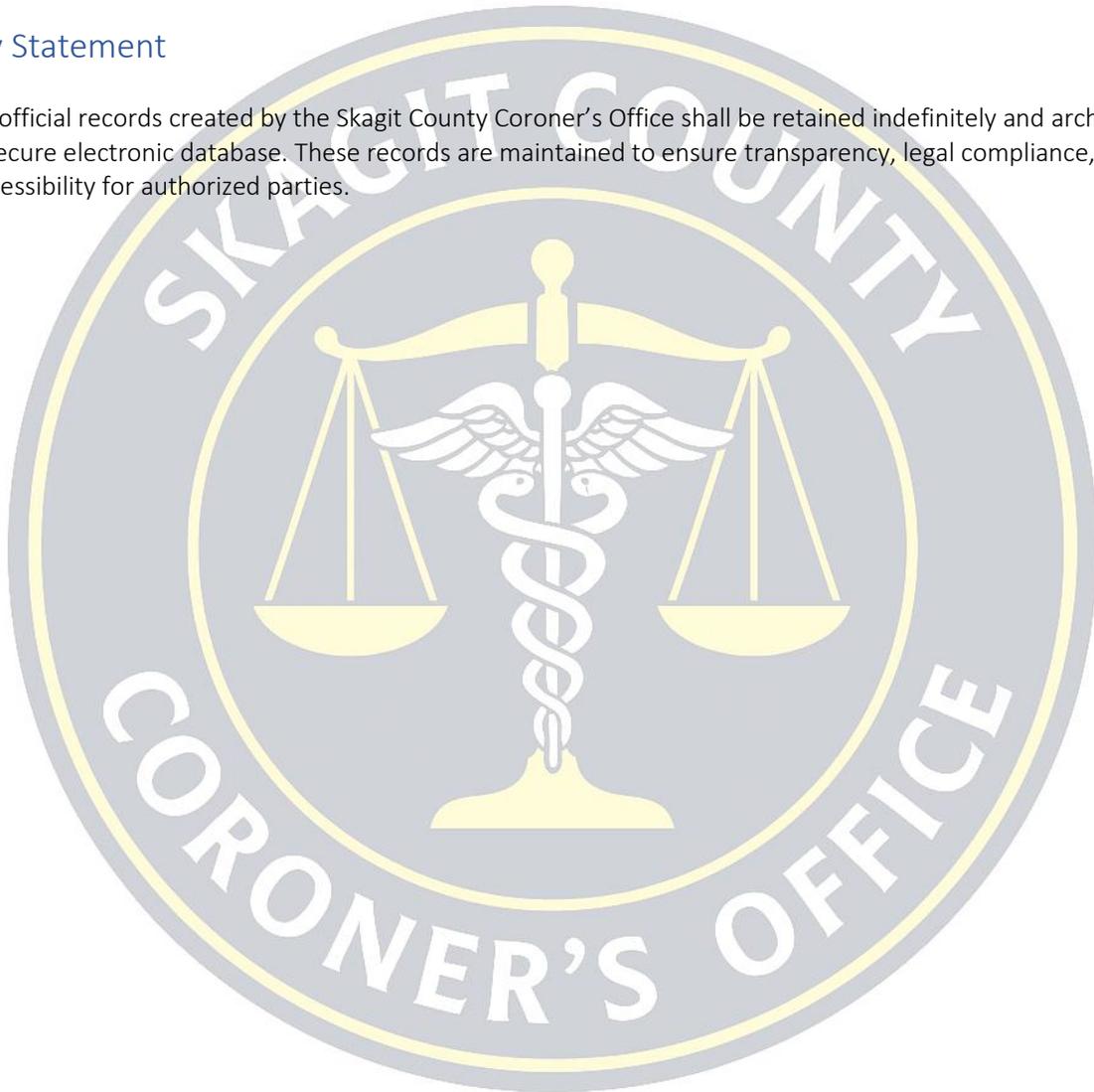
Records Storage and Maintenance Policy

Purpose

To establish clear guidelines for the retention, storage, access, and release of official records generated by the Skagit County Coroner’s Office, in compliance with Washington State law.

Policy Statement

All official records created by the Skagit County Coroner’s Office shall be retained indefinitely and archived in a secure electronic database. These records are maintained to ensure transparency, legal compliance, and accessibility for authorized parties.



<i>Date Implemented</i>	<i>Date Revised</i>
-------------------------	---------------------

02/24/2017	7/14/2022
------------	-----------

	11/8/2024
--	-----------

	10/14/2025
--	------------

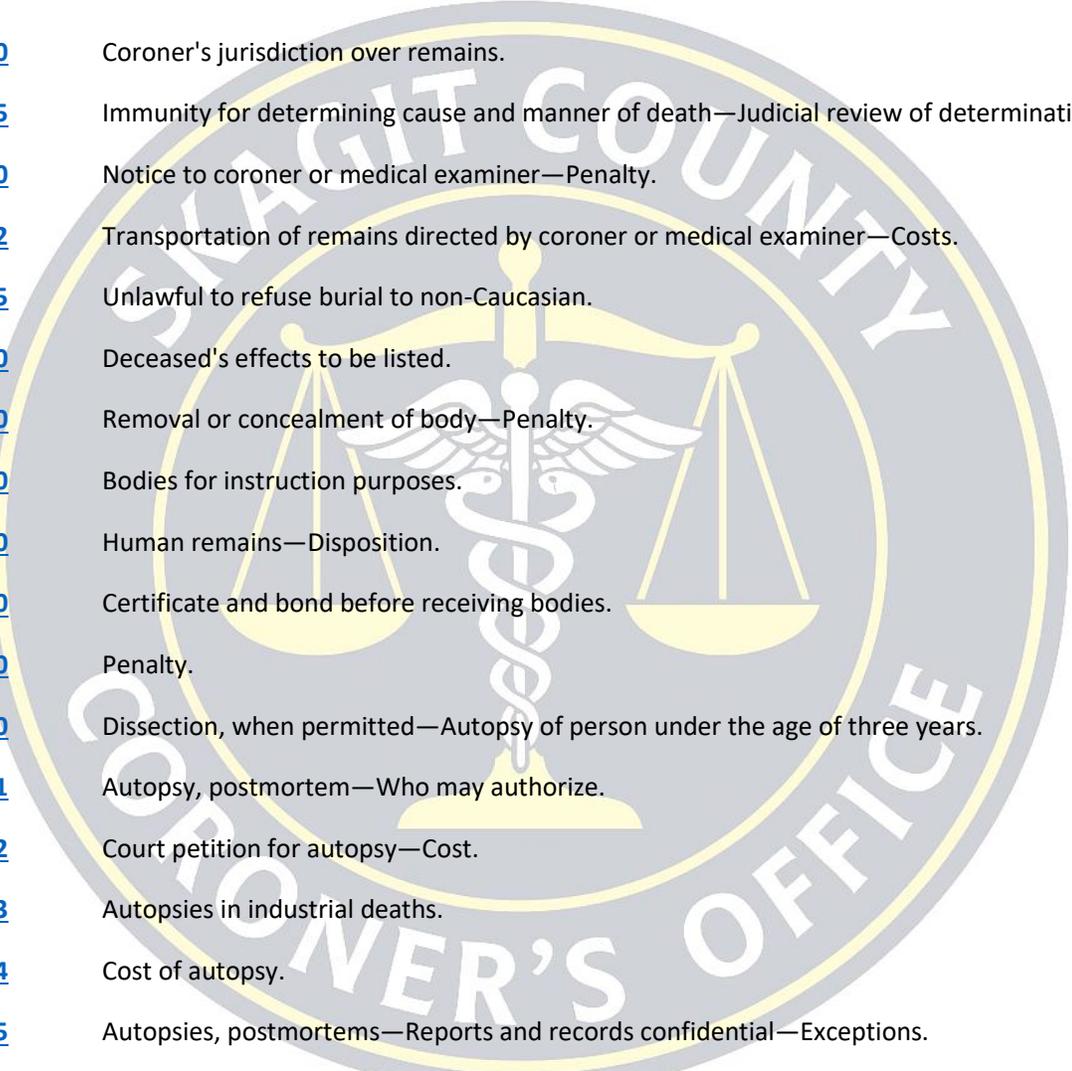
[RCWs](#) > [Title 68](#) > [Chapter 68.50](#)

Complete Chapter | [RCW Dispositions](#)

Chapter [68.50](#) RCW

HUMAN REMAINS

Sections



68.50.010	Coroner's jurisdiction over remains.
68.50.015	Immunity for determining cause and manner of death—Judicial review of determination.
68.50.020	Notice to coroner or medical examiner—Penalty.
68.50.032	Transportation of remains directed by coroner or medical examiner—Costs.
68.50.035	Unlawful to refuse burial to non-Caucasian.
68.50.040	Deceased's effects to be listed.
68.50.050	Removal or concealment of body—Penalty.
68.50.060	Bodies for instruction purposes.
68.50.070	Human remains—Disposition.
68.50.080	Certificate and bond before receiving bodies.
68.50.090	Penalty.
68.50.100	Dissection, when permitted—Autopsy of person under the age of three years.
68.50.101	Autopsy, postmortem—Who may authorize.
68.50.102	Court petition for autopsy—Cost.
68.50.103	Autopsies in industrial deaths.
68.50.104	Cost of autopsy.
68.50.105	Autopsies, postmortems—Reports and records confidential—Exceptions.
68.50.106	Autopsies, postmortems—Analyses—Opinions—Evidence—Costs.
68.50.107	State toxicological laboratory established—State toxicologist.
68.50.108	Autopsies, postmortems—Consent to embalm, cremate body, or make final disposition—Time limitation.
68.50.110	Burial, cremation, alkaline hydrolysis, or natural organic reduction.

<u>68.50.115</u>	Coroner and medical examiner liability—Release of information.
<u>68.50.120</u>	Holding body for debt—Penalty.
<u>68.50.130</u>	Unlawful disposal of remains.
<u>68.50.140</u>	Unlawful disturbance, removal, or sale of human remains—Penalty.
<u>68.50.160</u>	Right to control disposition of remains—Liability of funeral establishment or cemetery authority—Liability for cost.
<u>68.50.170</u>	Effect of authorization.
<u>68.50.185</u>	Individual final disposition—Exception—Penalty.
<u>68.50.200</u>	Permission to remove human remains.
<u>68.50.210</u>	Notice for order to remove remains.
<u>68.50.220</u>	Exceptions.
<u>68.50.230</u>	Human remains that have not been disposed—Rules.
<u>68.50.232</u>	Remains—Entrusting to funeral homes or mortuaries.
<u>68.50.240</u>	Record of human remains to be kept.
<u>68.50.270</u>	Possession of human remains.
<u>68.50.290</u>	Corneal tissue for transplantation—Presumption of good faith.
<u>68.50.300</u>	Release of information concerning a death.
<u>68.50.310</u>	Dental identification system established—Powers and duties.
<u>68.50.320</u>	Procedures for investigating missing persons—Availability of files.
<u>68.50.325</u>	Indigenous persons—Identification of remains—Spiritual practices.
<u>68.50.330</u>	Identification of body or human remains by dental examination—Comparison of dental examination records with dental records of dental identification system.
<u>68.50.645</u>	Skeletal human remains—Duty to notify—Ground disturbing activities—Coroner determination—Definitions.
<u>68.50.900</u>	Effective date—1987 c 331.
<u>68.50.901</u>	Application—1993 c 228.
<u>68.50.902</u>	Application—Construction—1993 c 228.
<u>68.50.903</u>	Severability—1993 c 228.
<u>68.50.904</u>	Short title—1993 c 228.

