



COVID-19 Death Reporting Frequently Asked Questions

Q. When should a death be reported as a COVID-19 death?

A. A death should be reported to ISDH if COVID-19 directly caused the patient's death or if the death resulted from a complication from the patient's COVID-19 disease.

Q. If the patient previously had COVID-19, but fully recovered prior to their death, does the death need to be reported to ISDH?

A. If the patient's death is unrelated to COVID-19 (i.e. accidental death or the patient fully recovered from COVID-19 and died of another cause) the death does not need to be reported to ISDH. However, if the death was related to a complication stemming from COVID-19 it should still be reported to ISDH as a COVID-19 related death.

Q. Is there a specific timeframe after a patient's COVID-19 disease/positive test in which their death should be reported to ISDH? What if they have tested negative after previously testing positive?

A. All confirmed COVID-19 deaths should be immediately reported to ISDH by calling 765-860-6053. There is no specific timeframe or repeat test results used to classify if a patient's death is COVID-19 related or not. Clinicians should use their best judgment to determine if the death was related to COVID-19 or a complication of COVID-19 and reports should be made accordingly.

Q. Who is responsible for reporting COVID-19 related deaths to ISDH?

A. Those working in hospital facilities, long-term care settings, local health departments and coroners should report COVID-19 related deaths as soon as they become aware of them.

Q. How do I report a death related to COVID-19?

A. Please call the ISDH COVID-19 Death Reporting Line at 765-860-6053. You will be prompted to leave a message containing the patient's name, date of birth, date of death, and your affiliation and contact information. ISDH staff monitor death reporting daily and enter reported deaths into the states surveillance system, NBS.

Q. If a death certificate is filed and COVID-19 is listed as a primary or underlying cause of death, will it get included in the death count?

A. The surveillance/death reporting team works with ISDH Vital Records to obtain a daily list of death certificates filed with COVID-19 listed as either a primary cause of death or an underlying cause of death. If the patient has a positive COVID-19 lab result in NBS, the death is added and would be reflected in the death count (if not previously recorded). If the patient does not have a positive COVID-19 lab in NBS, the patient is added as a 2019 Clinical Novel Coronavirus case and the death would be counted as presumptive.

Q. A patient who died was added into NBS as a 2019 Clinical Novel Coronavirus investigation, but I know they tested positive for COVID-19. What should I do?

A. Please submit a morbidity report for the patient under 2019 Novel Coronavirus and include the laboratory information. The surveillance team will update the 2019 Clinical Novel Coronavirus Investigation to 2019 Novel Coronavirus and the death will be added into the count.

Q. A patient with lab-confirmed COVID-19 died in my jurisdiction and the death was included in the death count, but the death certificate filed does not list COVID-19 as a cause of death. What should I do?

A. If you believe the death certificate has been filed in error, please contact your vital records staff member to work with the medical certifier and/or ISDH Vital Records to have death certificate re-examined. To note, ISDH Vital Records staff is proactively reaching out to a medical certifier if a patient is COVID-19 positive and dies but COVID-19 is not listed on the death certificate.

Q. Does the death count on the ISDH COVID-19 dashboard include clinical novel coronavirus cases?

A. No, both the case and death counts displayed at the jurisdiction level on the dashboard only include confirmed “2019 Novel Coronavirus” cases or those with positive laboratory results. Clinical deaths, documented in 2019 Clinical Novel Coronavirus investigations in NBS, are only shown in aggregate for the entire state. This number is listed as “Probable Deaths” on the dashboard.

Q. Where can I find information about how physicians/medical certifiers should be completing death certificates for patients with COVID-19?

A. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has several great resources available on this topic, including a short YouTube video. They can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvss/coronavirus/alert-5-covid-19-video-guidance-and-updated-coding-rules.pdf>. ISDH guidance for coroners is available here:

https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/IN_COVID-19_Coroners%206.3.20.pdf