



NYC
Office of Chief
Medical Examiner

Vincent Ruggiero
Acting Director
Mortuary Services
Forensic Operations Division
vruggiero@ocme.nyc.gov

421 East 26th Street
New York, NY 10016
Tel: (212) 323-1589
Cell: (347) 386-9748
Fax: (646) 500-6785

Memorandum

Date: February 13, 2015

To: Tour Commanders, AODs, Mortuary, Communications

From: Vincent Ruggiero
Acting Director, Mortuary Services
Forensic Operations Division
Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME)

Re: **Funeral Homes Attempting to Return Cases to the Office of Chief Medical Examiner**

The NYC OCME has no obligation to take custody of a decedent from a Funeral Establishment where the family, next of kin, or other authorizing party is in dispute or unable to pay the funeral establishment for services. According to NYS Law, the Funeral Director is obligated, under contract, to follow through with final arrangements unless the family or person authorized to direct disposition provides either an original, signed, and notarized letter requesting city burial or case falls with OCME's jurisdiction.

Clarification and instructions on cases where Funeral Establishments are attempting to return cases to OCME where OCME has no obligation or jurisdiction are as follows:

1. NO OCME staff shall take receipt of any case from a Funeral Establishment without approval from the Assistant Commissioner of Forensic Operations, the Director of Forensic Operations or the Director of Mortuary's Office.
2. Any OCME staff that encounters a Funeral Establishment that is attempting to return a case to OCME where OCME has no obligation or jurisdiction shall notify the Tour Commander immediately. If the Tour Commander is unavailable, then this call must go to the Administrator on Duty.
3. If the funeral director requires further clarification, then the Tour Commander or AOD is to refer the individual to Deborah Orecki at the NYS Bureau of Funeral Directing at (518) 402-0785.
4. If a Funeral Establishment indicates that a family is now requesting City Burial, the Funeral Establishment must provide the following to Communications before a case number will be issued and the case allowed to be returned.
 - A competent, **work copy of a signed death certificate** shall be faxed to the OCME Communications Unit at (646) 500-5762 prior to accepting case.

- A competent **burial permit** with the appropriate interim disposition (OCME Facility) shall be faxed to the OCME Communications Unit at (646) 500-5762 prior to accepting case.
 - A **signed and notarized letter from the NOK or person authorized to direct disposition requesting city burial** shall be faxed to the OCME Communications Unit at (646) 500-5762 prior to accepting a case.
 - A completed health care facility **face sheet** with all pertinent information including demographics, family contacts, and physician information for the decedent must be faxed to the OCME Communications Unit at (646) 500-5762 prior to accepting a case.
5. If any of the above requirements are not met, then the case cannot be accepted by OCME. The Funeral Establishment shall be directed to call back when all paperwork is ready for review.
 6. The Funeral Establishment must also provide hard copies of all documents at the moment when custody is transferred to OCME.
 7. Upon acceptance of the case and approval by the Tour Commander or AOD, Communications shall direct the Funeral Establishment to transport the remains as follows:
 - Cases originating in the Bronx or Queens shall be transported by the funeral director to the Queens OCME.
 - Cases originating in Brooklyn, Staten Island or Manhattan shall be transported by the funeral director to the Brooklyn OCME.