

AUTOPSY SERVICE

Autopsies may be performed at Christiana hospital on patients who die at ChristianaCare. Autopsies may also be performed on those who die at home or in hospice, but only if the decedent was a recent patient at ChristianaCare and only if the request for autopsy comes from a member of the Medical/Dental staff of ChristianaCare. If the circumstances associated with a patient's death meet the Medical Examiner's criteria, then the case is referred to the Office of the Medical Examiner (302-577- 3420). Both the referral and the outcome of the referral from the Medical Examiner's office are documented in the patient's chart.

Autopsies are performed Monday through Friday. Except in unusual circumstances, and only when approved by the Department of Pathology, the Autopsy Section performs autopsies during regular business hours so that access to any needed ancillary services are available.

The Autopsy Section cannot perform an autopsy unless permission is obtained on a ChristianaCare autopsy permission form. It is also required that the body of the decedent be tagged so that it can be definitely identified. Permission for autopsy comes from the decedent's next of kin in order of priority: legal spouse, adult child, either parent, or sibling. Permission for autopsy on stillborn infants is given by the decedent's mother, regardless of the mother's age. If there is some question about the next of kin, please contact Health Information Management Services (302-733-1111) for assistance.

A limited autopsy may be performed in which only some part or parts of the body are examined. Request for a limited autopsy is documented on the consent form signed by the next of kin. There is no charge for an autopsy performed in our department.

The autopsy is a private medical procedure and access to the autopsy room is strictly limited to approved personnel. Please note that the autopsy permission form grants permission for the use of material obtained at autopsy for research or educational purposes. It also gives permission for photographs to be taken.

Revised: 1/16/24