



Department of Health

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

JAMES V. McDONALD, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

JOHANNE E. MORNE, M.S.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

To: New York State Medical Examiners and County Coroners
From: Bureau of EMS & Trauma Systems
Date: October 29, 2024
RE: Release of Autopsy Reports for Trauma Center Quality Assurance

BACKGROUND:

The New York State Trauma Community is dedicated to ensuring the highest level of patient care and patient outcomes is achieved in New York State. As part of this commitment to patient care it is imperative for hospitals designated as Trauma Centers to perform ongoing and extensive quality assurance processes. As part of these processes care provided before a patient arrives at a Trauma Center and determinations of death that may be reviewed after a patient has died are all critical information to perform quality assurance processes and implement ongoing performance improvement initiatives.

LEGISLATION:

Verification as a Trauma Center in New York State is based on the national standards set by the [The American College of Surgeons | ACS \(facs.org\)](https://www.facs.org).

The legislation listed below was enacted to support the Trauma Centers in New York who are seeking verification by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Committee on Trauma to obtain or maintain their New York Designation as a Trauma Center by the Department.

Section 4210 of the Public Health Law, subdivision 2-a states:

"Where a person dies while under care or treatment at a general hospital (as defined by subdivision ten of section twenty-eight hundred one of this chapter) or while recovering from such care or treatment, any autopsy report for such person shall be made available, by the coroner or medical examiner under whose jurisdiction the autopsy was performed in a timely manner to the hospital, for the purpose of ongoing performance improvement of such hospital, including for the purposes of sections 2805-j and 2805-k of this chapter. All such reports in the possession of a hospital shall be subject to the provisions of section 2805-m of this chapter."

PURPOSE:

Successful verification by the ACS relies heavily on a Center's performance improvement process, which is significantly enhanced by the availability of autopsy reports. Access to autopsy reports in a timely manner is often critical to understanding a patient's complete clinical picture and identifying opportunities for improvement in the care provided.

In several regions of the state, medical examiners participate in their Regional Trauma Advisory Committee (RTAC) activities which include case reviews that are utilized for Performance Improvement.

OUTCOME:

Based on information and statute outlined above, the goal is to increase the number of autopsy reports that are shared with trauma centers for quality assurance initiatives. In addition, the objectives are to increase the engagement of Medical Examiners with the Regional Trauma Centers in order to increase positive patient comes from traumatic injuries that are cared for in New York State Trauma Centers.

With any questions or concerns, please contact either of the following staff in our Trauma Designation Branch: Daniel.Clayton@health.ny.gov or Thomas.Bonfiglio@health.ny.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan Greenberg", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ryan Greenberg

Director

Bureau of Emergency Medical Services and Trauma Systems