



Family Resources

On behalf of the Bonneville County Coroner's Office, we offer our deepest sympathy to you for your loss.

- Shante Sanchez, MS, MDI, Coroner

BONNEVILLE COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE

605 N Capital Ave, Idaho Falls ID

coroner@bonnevillecountyidaho.gov

On Call/Facility – (208) 533-6999

Coroner's Personal Cell – (208) 226-6182

Fax - (208) 693-1622

This is a difficult time for you and your family, and we know that you will have many questions. We hope that you will find this resource helpful in answering questions as you go through the next several days and weeks. Please take time to review the information and feel free to call us anytime if you need additional information and assistance.

The Bonneville County Coroner's Office is required by Idaho law 19-4301 to conduct an investigation regarding any deaths that might be a threat to the health and safety of the public and/or any sudden, suspicious, unattended or unexpected deaths.

The coroner may determine whether it is necessary to conduct testing and/or have your loved one transported to our contacted forensic pathology agency for an autopsy. The extent of the testing and/or autopsy will be determined by the Coroner and will be based on the information needed to determine an appropriate cause and manner of death. Idaho law both requires and authorizes the County Coroner to make these determinations.

NEXT STEPS FOR FAMILY

- ❖ You will need to select a funeral home to handle final arrangements for your loved one. The funeral director will assist you in making the necessary arrangements, and will be your primary contact for inquiries about those arrangements.
- ❖ Contact information for the Coroner's Office is located at the front of this resource including the Coroner's personal cell phone.
- ❖ Please review this brochure for answers to questions and information that can assist you during this time. Information about other agencies or resources that can help you as you move forward is also included, along with how to request copies of documents you may need. Please feel free to contact us with any additional questions.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I contact the Bonneville County Coroner's Office?

The Bonneville County Coroner's Office can be reached by calling (208)533-6999. Please leave a message and someone will return your call as soon as possible.

What funeral home should I use?

The Bonneville County Coroner's Office is a governmental office and as such, we cannot refer families to specific funeral homes. We encourage you to consult with your family and friends for recommendations.

Who can make funeral arrangements or final disposition decisions for a decedent?

Only Next-of-Kin (NOK) or the individual who holds a durable power of attorney for health care for your loved one can make funeral arrangements or final disposition arrangements for your loved one. A significant other or friend, regardless of how long they have known or been involved with your loved one cannot make arrangements unless they have legal documentation authorizing them to do so.

Do I need to come to the Bonneville County Coroner's Office to identify my loved one? Can I view my loved one at the facility?

No. You won't be asked to come to the Bonneville County Coroner's Office to complete an identification. The coroner and staff, along with our contracted forensic pathology center, work diligently to properly identify each decedent we encounter. Viewing your loved one in the comfort of the funeral home is the only option available in Bonneville County.

How do I get my loved one's personal items back?

Your loved one's personal items will be released with him/her to the funeral home chosen by legal Next-of-Kin. The funeral home will then arrange a time with legal Next-of-Kin to receive those personal items.

Will my loved one receive an autopsy? How will I know if an autopsy is performed?

The Coroner will review the circumstances surrounding your loved one's death and decide whether to perform an autopsy based on the standards of forensic practice outlined by the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME).

Legal Next-of-Kin will be notified when a decision has been made to perform an autopsy. Your investigator will contact you and answer any questions you may have.

Why is the Coroner's Office investigating my loved one's death?

The Bonneville County Coroner's Office is governed by Idaho State Statutes. These statutes require that the Coroner investigate certain types of deaths to determine cause and manner of death. The following list does not cover all types of deaths that require investigations, but generally include:

- * Deaths associated with trauma or violence, whether homicide, suicide or accident.
- * Deaths associated with suspicious, unusual, or unnatural circumstances.
- * Deaths not attended by a physician and where the cause of death cannot be certified by a physician.
- * Deaths who are unclaimed, exposed or unidentified.
- * Deaths occurring within 24 hours of admission to a hospital or deaths in the ER.
- * Deaths due to infections or contagious disease or other potentially hazardous public health conditions
- * Deaths involving stillborn, infants, and children under 18 who do not have a significant diagnosis that led to death.

My loved one had an autopsy. Will we still be able to have an open casket funeral?

The surgical procedures used to perform an autopsy do not interfere with having an open casket funeral.

What if I do NOT want an autopsy performed?

The Coroner authorizes autopsies based on the circumstances surrounding the death and the need to determine cause and manner of death; However, the investigator will note your concern and share that information but under Idaho Code 19-4103B either the Coroner or Prosecuting Attorney can order an autopsy and the decision does not require the consent of the Next-of-Kin.

What if I want an autopsy to be completed and the Coroner's Office is not going to do one?

The Coroner reviews each case to decide if an autopsy is needed to determine cause and manner of death. If the Coroner determines that the cause and manner of death can be accurately determined without an autopsy, absent a request by the prosecuting attorney, an autopsy will not be completed. However, the investigator will note your concern or request in the case file and share that information with the Coroner. If a final decision is made to not complete an autopsy and you still wish to have one completed, you will need to arrange for a private autopsy to be completed by a private pathologist at a local medical facility and transportation to and from that facility.

Where will my loved one's autopsy take place?

The Bonneville County Coroner's Office currently contracts with the Ada County Coroner's Office for forensic pathology services. The Ada County Coroner's Office is currently the only nationally accredited forensic pathology center in Idaho.

When will my loved one be released by the Coroner's Office?

Your loved one will be released to a funeral home immediately unless there is the determination that an autopsy will be required. In the event

of an autopsy, your loved one will be released to the funeral home once the autopsy has been completed.

How long does it take to determine cause and manner of death?

There is not a set amount of time for determining the cause and manner of death. Each case is unique to that individual. An autopsy or forensic testing is generally conducted as soon as possible based on scheduling with the forensic pathology center. Our staff works diligently to determine cause and manner of death; However, we can not guarantee a specific time frame for those to be completed as they are dependent upon the unique circumstances of the investigation for each individual.

How long does it take for toxicology results to come back?

The Bonneville County Coroner's Office uses an outside facility for toxicology testing and there is no set time when we will get the results back. Toxicology results can take anywhere from 6-8 weeks to be completed.

My loved one had an autopsy. When will the results be available?

The autopsy procedure is very comprehensive and the process, along with additional testing, is time consuming. The final report (known as an autopsy report) may be delayed due to case load. If you would like to find out if there are preliminary autopsy findings, you may call and request to speak to the investigator assigned to the case. An autopsy report for cases with criminal charges will not be released for 45 days after sentencing and/or all appeal times have passed.

There is blood and other body fluid or biohazardous materials in the location where my loved one died. Who can I call to help clean the area?

There are a number of biohazard and scene clean-up companies that can be found on the internet and provide resources. Homeowners insurance or renter's insurance may help with these costs and you will want to contact your insurance company to get more information.

Do I have to pay for Coroner services (autopsy, specimen testing, investigation services, etc.)?

The Bonneville County Coroner's Office is a county government office funded by tax dollars. Standard services provided by the Coroner's Office, in cases under the jurisdiction of the office, are completed at no additional cost to your loved one's immediate family. In certain cases, the Coroner's Office may charge fees for non-standard services.

What do I do next?

We recommend that you seek support from family and friends in this difficult time. If you are the legal Next-of-Kin or legally authorized person, you will need to begin making final arrangements for your loved one. Once you have selected a funeral home, the director can guide you and help you fill out all necessary paperwork.

Will I be told the cause and manner of death for my loved one?

Yes. Cause of death is the medical condition or process that resulted in your loved one's death. Manner of death is the circumstance of or the way that death occurred such as Natural, Accident, Homicide, Suicide, or Undetermined.

In cases when there an autopsy or forensic inspection for your loved one, the investigator will contact the legal next-of-kin, and will let you know what the final cause and manner of death are and update you on test results.

REQUESTING REPORTS, PHOTOS & COPIES

How do I get a copy of the autopsy report or coroner's forensic report?

The legal next-of-kin or durable power of attorney for health care may request a copy of the autopsy report or coroner's forensic report from the Bonneville County Coroner's Office.

Please contact the Bonneville County Coroner's Office at (208)533-6999 or at coroner@bonnevillecountyidaho.gov for a records request.

Reports become available once received from our forensic pathology center unless there is legal action pending.

If your loved one did NOT go to autopsy, reports are generally available within 3-6 weeks.

Can I request copies of the photos taken from the investigation?

In the event that there is lawsuit filed with the court or there are other legal matters where you have hired an attorney and photos are required, your attorney can submit a formal request for a copy of the photographs needed. The request will be reviewed by legal counsel for Bonneville County and your attorney will be notified of the outcome of that review.

CONFIRMATION OF DEATH LETTERS

I've been asked to provide a confirmation of death. What do I do?

The death certificate acts as a confirmation of death.

There may be a time when you are asked to provide a confirmation of death by an organization or business such as your loved one's life insurance company and the death certificate is not yet available. In those cases, you can request a confirmation of death letter from the Bonneville County Coroner's Office.

You will need to contact the Bonneville County Coroner's Office directly for the letter request.

Do I have to go to probate?

Idaho law regulates probate actions. You should contact an attorney to help you understand what your options are.

MY LOVED ONE'S MEDICATIONS

Why are my loved one's medications collected?

Your investigator collects all medications prescribed to or possible taken by your loved one when they respond to a scene. These medications are reviewed, counted and cataloged, and then compared to when prescriptions were filled to determine compliance with medications.

Once the medications are cataloged they are destroyed in a safe manner.

What steps should I take if I found medications belonging to my loved one?

Contact your investigator if you believe these medications are vital to your loved one's case. They may have several questions for you so having the medication bottles with you when you call will be helpful.

If the investigator does not take custody of the medications, please do not flush medications down the toilet/drain. In order to protect others, reduce misuse, and protect the water system, proper disposal of medications is important. There are several medication disposal lockers throughout the city.

DEATH CERTIFICATE PROCESS

What is the process regarding the death certificate?

- * Decedent information collected by the coroner's office is shared with the funeral home to assist with contacting next-of-kin and starting the after death documentation process.
- * The funeral home meets with families to collect further demographic information required for the death certificate.
- * Death certificate information is entered by the funeral home into the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare Bureau of Vital Records and Statistics online software and assigned to the coroner.
- * In cases of natural death where the cause of death has been determined via investigation and medical record review, the death certificate is completed online and usually available through the funeral home within 2 weeks of signing. Collection and review of the investigation, witness statements, medical records and social/work history can often take time so we thank you for your patience as we make the appropriate determinations.
- * In cases where the cause of death is not readily apparent, toxicology and/or autopsy may be ordered. In those cases:

- Death certificates are signed as “pending investigation” and remains so until medical records, toxicology results and autopsy reports are completed and received.
- Once all information is obtained to determine a proper cause and manner of death, the coroner will sign a supplemental and the official death certificate will be made available.

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

If your loved one had a pre-need, pre-paid funeral plan, that plan should be followed.

Legal next-of-kin or your loved one’s “durable power of attorney” will be responsible to make arrangements for the funeral, burial/cremation, and payment cost for these services.

If you are unable to pay for the funeral/cremation, Idaho law allows you to apply for financial assistance for those costs through the Indigent Services Office in the county where your loved one lived. Other assistance options may be available under specific circumstances and our office urges you to look into these options online.

NEXT-OF-KIN INFORMATION/AUTHORITY TO MAKE DECISIONS

The Bonneville County Coroner’s Office follows an order of authority for next-of-kin and/or who can make final decisions for your loved one. This list does not include all limitations but does show the general order of authority we follow:

- * If your loved one died while on active duty, the person listed in a written document signed by your loved one or the persona listed by your loved one in his/her United States Department of Defense records of emergency data.
- * The person listed as an agent under a durable power of attorney for health care or other durable power of attorney if it includes the authority to make funeral, burial, or cremation arrangements.

- * The surviving spouse of your loved one (even if separated but not divorced)
- * A majority of the surviving adult children
- * The surviving parent(s)
- * A majority of the surviving adult sibling(s)
- * The person appointed by a court as the personal representative or administrator of your loved one’s estate
- * The adult person(s) entitled to inherit from your loved one under the laws of Idaho, in the next degree of kinship

****If any of the designated persons in the list are not competent, authority moves to the next person on the list. If there is more than one person fitting the category listed, a majority of those legally competent persons must agree on the disposition.*

DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR HEALTHCARE

A durable power of attorney for healthcare is the only type of power of attorney that does not expire after death. There are different types of power of attorneys: financial only, healthcare only, some for a specific amount of time, and some durable. The Bonneville County Coroner’s Office requires that anyone acting on behalf of a decedent have a durable power of attorney for healthcare that allows that person who will make final decisions for your loved one unless they are legal next-of-kin. Idaho law states that a person who has a durable power of attorney for healthcare is the person who will make final decisions for your loved one.

BONNEVILLE COUNTY CORONER

- SHANTE SANCHEZ -

Shante Sanchez has always had a passion for the complexities of forensics, mental health and death investigation. Having moved to Idaho when she was in high school, Shante has been an active and devoted member in the community for over a decade and hopes to serve with compassion, empathy and understanding of the impact of Idaho's unique qualities.

After graduating at Idaho State University with her Bachelor of Science in Psychology, she embarked on a journey to achieve the upmost level of understanding of the abnormal mind and criminological experiences. She received her Masters of Science in Forensic Psychology from Arizona State University in 2020 with an Emphasis in Investigative Criminology and a Specialization in Severe Mental Illness and Violent Crime.

In addition to her entrepreneurial and academic achievements, she spent multiple years in mental health intervention as a case manager, skills training coordinator, behavioral interventionist for juveniles and administrator for various mental health agencies. After developing a deeper understanding of the impact of mental illness, she realized the importance of mental health services, victimology services and continued crisis intervention in the community.

Shante received her Medicolegal Death Investigation certification through the University of North Dakota. She also is actively working towards her American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigator (ABMDI), a nationally recognized achievement. Shante is a devoted mother of two rambunctious boys, professional business owner and dedicated community member. She is proud to serve the residents of Bonneville County and bring peace, closure and dignity to those that have passed.

Shante Sanchez, MS, MDI, Elected Coroner