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Revision: 08/05/24	CHAD CHRONISTER, SHERIFF	
Reviewed: 04/14/24	STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE	Page: 1 of 3

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF PATROL SERVICES; DEATH INVESTIGATIONS

- I. **PURPOSE:** This standard operating procedure aims to establish guidelines for investigating death cases by Department of Patrol Services personnel.
- II. **SCOPE:** This procedure shall apply to personnel assigned to investigate death cases.
- III. **DISCUSSION:** The guidelines set forth in this procedure shall be used during death investigations. The investigation will not be limited to these guidelines. The originating deputy shall take all reasonable and prudent steps to bring the investigation to a successful conclusion.
- IV. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - A. **Hospice Case** - A case in which the deceased was terminally ill and expected to die; the attending physicians have prepared a letter stating they will sign the death certificate and funeral home arrangements have been pre-arranged.
 - B. **Medical Examiner Case** - Any death case in which the physician is not available or refuses to sign the death certificate, or any death case which is not natural or foul play is suspected (e.g., homicide, suicide, manslaughter, overdose).
 - C. **Natural Death** - Any death case in which the death is of natural causes and the victim's doctor will sign the death certificate.
- V. **PROCEDURE:**
 - A. Investigative procedure to be followed by the originating deputy.
 - * 1. If the death appears to be natural, the deputy shall immediately contact the Medical Examiner's Office (813-914-4567). If the Medical Examiner intends to respond, maintain the scene's integrity and complete an incident report, record the Medical Examiner personnel taking over the investigation and the time of arrival at the scene. If the Medical Examiner declines to respond to the natural death, the deputy shall follow the procedure outlined below.
 - * a. Take photographs of the victim and the scene as it was found before moving the body.
 - * b. Check the body for bruises or signs of foul play.
 - * c. Take photographs of the victim's front and back, face, hands, eyes, tattoos, and any injuries.
 - * d. Contact the family physician and ask if he/she will sign the death certificate and ask what will be listed as the cause of death.
 - * e. Notify the immediate supervisor of the facts surrounding the death.
 - * f. Make every effort to notify the victim's next of kin in person.
 - * g. Assist the victim's family in contacting the funeral home to take custody of the victim's body.
 - h. Remain at the scene until the victim has been removed.

