Death Investigations

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The prompt and appropriate actions of police officers during the initial stages of an attempt suicide or death investigation, including the officers first on scene, supervisory officers, and divisional investigators, may assist in the quick and successful resolution of the investigation.

Definitions

Child as defined by the Child and Family Services Act, means any person under the age of 16 years.

Natural Causes means a death due to explainable medical causes including old age or disease.

Sudden Death means an unexpected death that is instantaneous or occurs within minutes or hours from any cause other than violence.

Suicide means the death of a person intentionally caused by the person's own actions.

Unnatural Sudden Death means the unexpected death of a person by suicide, homicide, accident or suspicious circumstances, and includes found human remains.

1. The first police officer to arrive at the scene of an attempt suicide/suicide, a possible sudden death, a suspicious death or a suspected homicide will

   • in the absence of a doctor or Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel
     − assess the vital signs and responsiveness of the victim
     − administer first-aid if signs of life are present
     − ensure the victim receives immediate medical attention
   • be responsible for preserving the evidence and crime scene until the arrival of investigators

2. When investigating a suicide or an unnatural sudden death, the police officer will

   • record all relevant information regarding the scene
   • record all relevant information regarding the victim
   • record the name, address, occupation and relationship of next of kin
   • record the name, address, phone number and occupation of
     − the person finding the body
     − all other persons present
     − any persons who have left the scene
   • record all relevant information obtained from witnesses and other persons on scene
   • canvass the immediate area for any witnesses, where appropriate
3. When the next of kin is present at the location of a natural sudden death, the police officer will

- search the deceased and list valuables and personal effects in their memorandum book
- give all valuables and personal effects to the next of kin, requesting that they sign the memorandum book in receipt
- offer the next of kin the use of Victim Services
- where there are concerns about the well-being of the next of kin, consider contacting other family members, neighbours, friends, or clergy to assist
- if the deceased is obviously destitute, advise the next of kin they may apply to Toronto Social Services for burial or to the Last Post Fund if the deceased is a former member of the Canadian Forces

4. When the next of kin is not present at the scene of a natural sudden death or cannot be determined, the police officer will

- search the body (in the presence of a witness, when possible) for information concerning the next of kin
- search the dwelling of the deceased for information pertaining to the next of kin
- seize valuables for safekeeping
- ensure the premises are secured until the next of kin or the public trustee is notified, or request the landlord to store large items until any of these persons are notified
- notify the appropriate Children’s Aid Society, if applicable
- arrange for the care of pets
- notify the next of kin as soon as possible

5. When notified of an unnatural sudden death, the investigating detective will

- attend the scene and co-ordinate the investigation
- provide direction concerning the return of valuables to the next of kin
- when the deceased cannot be readily identified, ensure identification made by a relative, a close friend or a person who knows the deceased in the presence of a morgue official