

# *Sample Family Information Letter Provided to Family Members/Caregivers*

Please accept our deepest condolences regarding your child's death. We respect and understand that this is a difficult time for you.

We would like to explain why our office has become involved. The {Name of MLDI Office} is required by law to investigate any unexpected death or unexplained death, or any death in which an injury or any unusual or unnatural event may have contributed to the death. We received information that your child's death was unexpected or that an unnatural event may have been a significant factor in their death. An unnatural event may involve traumatic injury such as a fracture or bruising, or may involve drowning, electrical injury, suffocation, or other event.

Our investigation starts with asking staff and/or family members questions. If we determine that further examination is needed, we will transport your child's body to the {Name of MLDI Office}. There, a medical doctor (forensic pathologist) will review the medical records, examine your child, and in most cases, perform an autopsy. Some deaths may remain unexplained after a full investigation and autopsy. Our examination or autopsy is usually completed within 24 hours. Our doctor will fill out the death certificate based on the information collected and your child can then be released to a funeral home of your choice.

Law enforcement may also become involved and ask additional questions. This is normal procedure for unexpected child deaths. These processes are required by law to make sure your child's cause of death is understood and properly documented.

If the cause of your child's death is not determined at the time of our autopsy examination, we will issue a temporary death certificate that will read "pending further investigation." In this case it can take several weeks, and sometimes several months to complete a thorough investigation. At that time, a final death certificate and autopsy report will be issued. We will then contact you by phone/mail to inform you that the investigation is completed and to schedule a time for us to discuss the final conclusions with you and answer any questions you may have. We will also provide the final report to your child's primary physician if they are known to us.

If you would like to obtain a copy of this report for yourself, please contact our office at XXX-XXX-XXXX, Monday through Friday, between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM. The death certificate will be issued through the XXX. Your funeral director will order them for you.

We would be glad to answer any questions you may have. You may contact us at XXX-XXX-XXXX. Our website is: XXX.

Once again, please accept our deepest sympathy for your loss.

Name and Signature of Chief  
Medical Examiner or Coroner

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Modified from: Diebold K. Sudden unexplained infant death investigation: a systematic training program for the professional infant death investigation specialist [Internet]. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; c2006. Chapter 7, Conducting the doll reenactment: concurrent and retrospective scene strategies; p. 184.

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