Process Flow in Medicolegal Death Investigations of Infants and Children

Sudden
Unexpected
Death of
Infant/Child
Occurs

Death
Reported to
ME/C and
jurisdiction
accepted

Death and Location of Incident Investigated by LE and MDI

- Performed within 24 hours (Ch12) by certified MDI (Ch4) and LE
- Complete Infant/Child Death Scene Investigation form (Appendix 3/4)
- Doll reenactment as indicated (Ch4)
- Medical records obtained
- If death in hospital, admission blood and urine samples obtained
- MDI, and other agencies involved, provide information to NOK on grief support resources available
- Communication with NOK is unbiased and nonaccusatory (Ch12)
- Information about death investigation process given to NOK, verbally and in writing
- NOK is provided one point of contact for ME/C office

Infant/Child Transported to Morgue

- Remove decedent from scene with care and compassion.
- When practical, place in body bag once in transport vehicle away from view of NOK.
- Preservation of personal property, evidence, and chain of custody

Post Mortem Examination Performed (Ch5)

- Perform as soon as possible
- Radiographic skeletal survey
- Autopsy (Ch5)
- Histology and toxicology
- Microbiologic and vitreous testing on cases unexplained after gross exam (Ch6)
- Metabolic studies when indicated (Ch9)
- Consider consultants for neuropathologic exam (Ch8) and heart exam (Ch7)
- Additional ancillary studies as indicated
- Collect and safeguard preservation of samples for genetic testing (Ch6)

Preliminary Findings Communicated to NOK and Appropriate Stakeholders within 48 hours

Body released to NOK for final disposition

Ancillary Testing and Consultations Complete

Death Certificate (Ch10) and Synoptic Report (Ch11)
Completed

Follow-up Communication

- Report Disseminated to NOK and Appropriate Agencies and Stakeholders
- Final results discussed with NOK and related stakeholders
- ME/C provides opportunity for NOK to ask questions of pathologist and participate with other stakeholders in post-autopsy conference when requested
- Investigation Complete
- Case reviewed by local Child Fatality Review Team

Key: Law Enforcement (LE), Medical Examiner/Coroner (ME/C), Medicolegal Death Investigator (MDI), Next of Kin (NOK)