

Instructions for Local Registrars

Death Certificate Compliance with the Death with Dignity Act

Washington State's Death with Dignity Act (RCW 70.245) states that "...the patient's death certificate...shall list the underlying terminal disease as the cause of death." The Act also states that, "Actions taken in accordance with this chapter do not, for any purpose, constitute suicide, assisted suicide, mercy killing, or homicide, under the law."

The Washington State Registrar of Vital Statistics will reject any death report that violates the requirements of the Death with Dignity Act. If you have any questions regarding compliance or cause of death reporting, contact the Department of Health at DeathwithDignity@doh.wa.gov.

Process Recommendations

1. Carefully review the cause-of-death section of every death report. Watch for any language that may indicate the decedent used the Death with Dignity Act.
 - a. Use of the following terms violates the Death with Dignity Act:
 - i. Suicide
 - ii. Assisted suicide
 - iii. Physician-assisted suicide
 - iv. Death with Dignity
 - v. I-1000
 - vi. Mercy killing
 - vii. Euthanasia
 - b. The following terms may indicate the decedent used the Death with Dignity Act:
 - i. Secobarbital or Seconal
 - ii. Pentobarbital or Nembutal
2. **DO NOT** sign or electronically approve a death report that includes language that may indicate use of the Death with Dignity Act.
3. Immediately contact the medical certifier and request they correct the death report. The medical certifier must correct the death report before you approve it and issue a burial-transit permit.