

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 424 Session of  
2017

INTRODUCED BY BENNINGHOFF, BARRAR, DEASY, DeLUCA, A. HARRIS,  
IRVIN, JAMES, KNOWLES, MENTZER, MILLARD, MOUL, MURT, NELSON,  
O'BRIEN, PICKETT, STAATS, WATSON, ZIMMERMAN AND KINSEY,  
FEBRUARY 10, 2017

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, FEBRUARY 10, 2017

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of June 29, 1953 (P.L.304, No.66), entitled "An  
2 act providing for the administration of a statewide system of  
3 vital statistics; prescribing the functions of the State  
4 Department of Health, the State Advisory Health Board and  
5 local registrars; imposing duties upon coroners,  
6 prothonotaries, clerks of orphans' court, physicians,  
7 midwives and other persons; requiring reports and  
8 certificates for the registration of vital statistics;  
9 regulating the disposition of dead bodies; limiting the  
10 disclosure of records; prescribing the sufficiency of vital  
11 statistics records as evidence; prescribing fees and  
12 penalties; and revising and consolidating the laws relating  
13 thereto," in death and fetal death registration, further  
14 providing for information for certificates and for coroner  
15 referrals.

16 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
17 hereby enacts as follows:

18 Section 1. Sections 502 and 503 of the act of June 29, 1953  
19 (P.L.304, No.66), known as the Vital Statistics Law of 1953, are  
20 amended to read:

21 Section 502. Death and Fetal Death Registration: Information  
22 for Certificates.--In preparing a certificate of death or fetal  
23 death, the person in charge of interment or of removal of a dead

1 body or fetal remains from the registration district shall  
2 obtain the required information. The following persons shall  
3 supply the information certified by their respective signatures:

4 (1) Personal information concerning the deceased or the  
5 fetal death shall be supplied by the person best acquainted with  
6 the facts.

7 (2) Subject to the limitation contained in clause (3), the  
8 medical certification, except in the event of a referral to the  
9 coroner pursuant to section five hundred three of this act,  
10 shall be supplied (i) in the case of a death, by the physician  
11 [or], certified registered nurse practitioner or physician  
12 assistant or (ii) dentist who is a staff member of an approved  
13 hospital who attended the deceased during the last illness,  
14 provided the death occurs in the hospital and the deceased had  
15 been admitted on the dental service, and (iii) in the case of a  
16 fetal death, by the attending physician [or], certified  
17 registered nurse practitioner or physician assistant.

18 (3) In all cases where the physician, certified registered  
19 nurse practitioner [or], physician assistant or dentist who  
20 would otherwise supply the medical certification is a member of  
21 the immediate family of the deceased, the case shall be referred  
22 to another physician, certified registered nurse practitioner  
23 [or], physician assistant or dentist who qualifies under clause  
24 (2) for a medical certification. In the event a qualified  
25 alternate physician, certified registered nurse practitioner  
26 [or], physician assistant or dentist is unavailable or unwilling  
27 to provide the medical certification required by law, the case  
28 shall be referred to the coroner of the county wherein the death  
29 occurred or to a coroner of an adjacent county. In no event  
30 shall a coroner sign a certificate of death or fetal death for a

1 deceased who was a member of his immediate family.

2 Section 503. Death and Fetal Death Registration: Coroner  
3 Referrals.--The local registrar or person in charge of interment  
4 or other person having knowledge of the death or fetal death  
5 shall refer to the coroner the following cases: (1) where no  
6 physician, certified registered nurse practitioner [or],  
7 physician assistant or dentist who is a staff member of an  
8 approved hospital was in attendance during the last illness of  
9 the deceased or in the case of a fetal death where there was no  
10 attending physician [or], certified registered nurse  
11 practitioner or physician assistant or (2) where the physician,  
12 certified registered nurse practitioner [or], physician  
13 assistant or dentist who is a staff member of an approved  
14 hospital in attendance during the last illness of the deceased  
15 or the attending physician [or], certified registered nurse  
16 practitioner or physician assistant in the case of a fetal death  
17 is physically unable to supply the necessary data, or (3) where  
18 the circumstances suggest that the death was sudden or violent  
19 or suspicious in nature or was the result of other than natural  
20 causes, or (4) where the physician, certified registered nurse  
21 practitioner, physician assistant, dentist or coroner who  
22 provided or would provide the medical certification is a member  
23 of the immediate family of the deceased. In every instance of a  
24 referral under this section, the coroner shall make an immediate  
25 investigation and shall supply the necessary data, including the  
26 medical certification of the death or fetal death. In no event  
27 shall a coroner sign a certificate of death or fetal death for a  
28 deceased who was a member of his immediate family.

29 Section 2. This act shall take effect in 60 days.