

To Whom It May Concern:

Beginning on July 1, 2019 all Medical Certifiers in the Commonwealth of Virginia must begin to enroll and fully participate in Virginia's Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS). Some of you may already be aware that this change would be coming at some point, and that time is now. The Virginia Funeral Directors Association along with the Medical Society of Virginia, Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association, Virginia Health Care Association, and the Virginia Department of Health Division of Vital Records worked hand in hand to craft a plan for full implementation of the EDRS. This rollout is broken into four phases based on medical specialty. It is recommended that doctors not wait until the last minute to get enrolled. The four phases are as follows:

1. Beginning on July 1, and concluding on September 30, all hospitalists, emergency department physicians, and medical directors of nursing homes must begin usage.
2. Beginning on October 1, and concluding on October 31, all family practitioners as well as doctors of internal medicine must enroll and participate.
3. Beginning on November 1, and concluding on November 30, all doctors of oncology and general surgery must enroll and participate.
4. Beginning on December 1, and concluding on December 31, all remaining doctors not yet enrolled in the EDRS must do so.

Currently, most death certificates (DCs) in Virginia are generated by the funeral home, submitted to the doctor for signature, and then returned to the funeral home to be filed. That pattern does not have to change, as funeral homes can still generate the DC and send to the doctor through the EDRS for his/her completion and signature. Additionally, any doctor or medical practice can file the appropriate paperwork to designate any staff member to sign on the doctors behalf. This allowance is meant to streamline the process.

Additionally, with the change in the law, doctors must now promptly sign the DC. It is and has been written in the code that the death certificate must be filed prior to disposition. While the Division of Vital Records (DVR) has not always fully enforced this rule, this change also comes with a crackdown by the DVR. Any doctor choosing not to promptly sign the DC will now be subject to a citation for unprofessional conduct. **Beginning on January 1, 2020, the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Vital Records will no longer accept paper death certificate copies. Therefore, you as a medical certifier, must be participating.** If you still refuse, as I mentioned above, you will be subject to a complaint of unprofessional conduct filed against your license. That is not meant as a threat to doctors, because funeral directors are now also subject to the same citation against their license.

It is important that the medical community and the funeral directors cooperate and make this transition as seamless as possible. We understand that hiccups may occur. That being said, ask the funeral home providing this letter to assist in the signup process as well as training and initial usage of the EDRS. It is very easy to use and helps to make the process much simpler. If the funeral home is unable to provide training or assistance, they will be asked to contact the VFDA, and someone will reach out to you to aid in training. The funeral home has also been provided with a copy of the new law for your reference were you to have any questions.

Thanks Again,

The Funeral Directors of the Virginia Funeral Directors Association