

Roles and Responsibilities

State and local roles and responsibilities are identified below. Regional roles are also identified when applicable. This is not an exhaustive list. Furthermore, although roles and responsibilities are listed, the MDH recognizes that the infrastructure to support these planning efforts is evolving and may not yet be in place.

| State | | | |
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| | Roles and responsibilities | Coordinating entity | Explanation |
| D-MERT Plan | Develop statewide plan to respond to pandemic flu. | Primary D-MERT Coordinator | Plan would anticipate a “worst case” scenario of 30,000 deaths over an eight week period. |
| Training | Develop training materials. | Primary D-MERT Coordinator | Meet with local morticians, M.E./Coroners, public health facilities, etc. to roll out plan. |
| Forms | Develop forms, lists and other necessary documents | Primary D-MERT Coordinator | Prepare necessary paperwork to ensure effective response. |
| Collaboration | Maintain relationship with National, state and local partners. | Primary D-MERT Coordinator | Include national, state and local input for and critique of the plan. |

| State | | | |
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| | Roles and responsibilities | Coordinating entity | Explanation |
| Response | Lead mortuary response to pandemic flu outbreak. | Primary D-MERT Coordinator | Take lead role in responding to a pandemic flu outbreak when it is anticipated that death tolls will overwhelm local mortuary services. |
| Stockpiling | Stockpiling of key items. | Primary D-MERT Coordinator | The state may be able to receive better pricing on stockpiled items when purchasing in large quantities. If so, these items could then be distributed around the state to regional stockpile locations and so on to the local level. Examples of items are: PPE, body bags, and temporary storage containers. |
| Central Data Bank | Develop a web based central data bank. | Primary D-MERT Coordinator | The ability for health care facilities to report deaths once local mortuary services are overwhelmed is a key part of an effective response. The ability to track human remains from point of collection to time of final disposition is vital. The right for next of kin to know the location of their loved one is vital. A web based central data bank will help achieve this goal. |
| Health Care | Ensure health and safety of mortuary industry workers. | Primary D-MERT Coordinator | By seeking advice from state and national health care experts, develop and distribute information to mortuary industry workers to ensure their health care protection. |

| Local | | | |
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| | Roles and responsibilities | Coordinating entity | Explanation |
| Personnel | Retain adequately trained staff. | Primary Funeral home owner/manager Contributor Medical Examiners/ Coroners Health Care Facilities | On average, funeral homes will have a surge of up to 5 times their normal business at the same time as they may lose 40% of their staff due to illness or other responsibilities. Funeral home operators should identify and train employees/volunteers to assist in all areas of the funeral home operation (excluding embalming). Medical Examiner/Coroner offices as well as hospital and other health care facilities should make similar staff considerations in relation to deaths. MDH may seek relaxation of some regulated activities such as removals and arrangements for funeral homes, cremation approvals for medical examiners/coroners, etc. |
| Temporary Morgue Facility | Identify temporary morgue location. | Primary City or County Emergency Planner/Emergency Preparedness Coordinators Contributor Medical Examiners/ Coroners Morticians Hospital and nursing home administrators | In some areas of the state, mortuaries will not be able to keep pace with the surge in death tolls. Hospitals, nursing homes and M.E./coroner morgues would quickly fill to capacity. A building to act as a temporary morgue and central collection point may be needed for processing of the dead until such time as mortuaries are able to recover from the surge. MDH will offer guidance on location requirements. |

| Local | | | |
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| Temporary Cemetery | Identify temporary cemetery location. | Primary City or County Emergency Planner/Emergency Preparedness Coordinators Contributor Morticians Local cemetery officials | In some areas of the state, mortuaries will not be able to keep pace with the surge in death tolls. Temporary burial may be required until such time as final disposition can be planned by the next of kin and accomplished by the funeral home of choice. |
| Non-Institutionalized Deaths | Develop plan for non-institutional deaths. | Primary Medical Examiners/Coroners Contributor Morticians, law enforcement, emergency medical technicians, fire departments | When a death does not happen in a place where the decedent was under the care of a physician, the death is required to be reported to the local medical examiner or coroner in order for them to rule out foul play prior to movement of the body. During a pandemic, these officials may not have the manpower to respond to each and every home death or the like. An alternative method should be developed where the local authorities can determine the need for further examination of the body at one central location where a single medical examiner/coroner may process many bodies at once. For example: If/when a temporary morgue is activated, a single medical examiner/coroner could process many deaths. |

| Local | | | |
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| Death Certificates | Develop plan for timely processing of death certificates. | Primary Physicians Medical examiner/ coroners Medical record officers Contributors State Registrar Local registrars Morticians | During a pandemic, the timely processing of death certificates will be crucial for families who need to carry on with their legal affairs. Physicians or medical examiners/coroners are responsible for listing a cause of death on the work sheet (death certificate) prepared for them by the funeral home. Morticians initiate the “work sheet” which eventually becomes the death certificate. Ninety-five of all Minnesota licensed funeral homes are able to electronically submit the work sheet to the State Registrar. Some physicians and clinics are also able to submit the cause of death electronically. For those clinics and physicians not on the electronic system, causes of death are faxed into the State Registrar for manual data entry. |
| Cremation Approvals | Develop protocol for cremation approval. | Primary Medical examiner/ coroner Contributors Mortician Crematory operators | Prior to cremation, state law requires that approval be obtained from the medical examiner/coroner (as well as next of kin). During a pandemic, these officials may not have the manpower to approve cremations for deaths due to pandemic flu in addition to the regular requests for cremation approval. An option may be that for deaths due to pandemic flu, the requirement for medical examiner/coroner approval be waived. All other deaths would still require the medical examiner/coroner approval. |
| Stockpiling | Stockpiling of key items. During a pandemic, the ability to quickly obtain certain items will be essential. A central stockpile and distribution system should be developed. | Primary Morticians Contributors Medical examiner/coroners, health care facilities | PPE, body bags, and temporary storage containers are examples of items to be considered. |

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