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**HOUSE BILL 1478**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2025 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Lekanoff and Reed

Read first time 01/21/25. Referred to Committee on Health Care & Wellness.

1 AN ACT Relating to modifying the manner of death listed in a  
2 death certificate following a conviction of controlled substance  
3 homicide; amending RCW 70.58A.200; and adding a new section to  
4 chapter 2.32 RCW.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 **Sec. 1.** RCW 70.58A.200 and 2019 c 148 s 13 are each amended to  
7 read as follows:

8 (1)(a) Reports of death and fetal death must comply with the  
9 requirements of this section.

10 (b) For the purposes of this section, "death" includes "fetal  
11 death" as defined in RCW 70.58A.010.

12 (2) A complete report of death must be filed with the local  
13 registrar in the local health jurisdiction where the death occurred  
14 for each death that occurs in this state. Except for circumstances  
15 covered by subsection (7) of this section, the report must be filed  
16 within five calendar days after the death or finding of human remains  
17 and prior to final disposition of the human remains as required by  
18 this section.

19 (a) If the place of death is unknown and the human remains are  
20 found in state prior to final disposition, the death must be filed in

1 state and the place where the human remains were found is the place  
2 of death.

3 (b) When death occurs in a moving conveyance within or outside  
4 the United States and the human remains are first removed from the  
5 conveyance in state, the death must be filed in state and the place  
6 of death is the place where the remains were removed from the moving  
7 conveyance.

8 (c) In all other cases, the place where death is pronounced is  
9 the place where death occurred.

10 (d) An approximate date of death may be used if date of death is  
11 unknown. If the date cannot be determined by approximation, the date  
12 of death must be the date the human remains were found.

13 (3) If the death occurred with medical attendance, a funeral  
14 director, funeral establishment, or person having the right to  
15 control the disposition of the human remains under RCW 68.50.160  
16 shall:

17 (a) Obtain and enter personal data on the report of death about  
18 the decedent from the person best qualified to provide the  
19 information;

20 (b) Provide the report of death to the medical certifier within  
21 two calendar days after the death or finding of human remains;

22 (c) File the completed report of death with the local registrar;  
23 and

24 (d) Obtain a burial-transit permit prior to the disposition of  
25 the human remains as required in RCW 70.58A.210.

26 (4) The medical certifier shall:

27 (a) Attest to the cause, date, and time of death; and

28 (b) Return the report of death to the funeral director, funeral  
29 establishment, or person having the right to control the disposition  
30 of the human remains under RCW 68.50.160 within two calendar days.

31 (5) The report of death may be completed by another individual  
32 qualified to be a medical certifier as defined in RCW 70.58A.010 who  
33 has access to the medical history of the decedent when:

34 (a) The medical certifier is absent or unable to attest to the  
35 cause, date, and time of death; or

36 (b) The death occurred due to natural causes, and the medical  
37 certifier gives approval.

38 (6) If the death occurred without medical attendance, the funeral  
39 director, funeral establishment, or person having the right to  
40 control the disposition of the human remains under RCW 68.50.160

1 shall provide the report of death to the coroner, medical examiner,  
2 or local health officer as allowed by (a) of this subsection.

3 (a) If the death occurred due to natural causes, the coroner,  
4 medical examiner, or local health officer shall determine whether to  
5 certify the report of death. If the coroner, medical examiner, or  
6 local health officer decides to certify the report of death, the  
7 person certifying the report shall:

8 (i) Attest to the manner, cause, and date of death without  
9 holding an inquest or performing an autopsy or postmortem, based on  
10 statements of relatives, persons in attendance during the last  
11 sickness, persons present at the time of death, or other persons  
12 having adequate knowledge of the facts;

13 (ii) Note that there was no medical attendance at the time of  
14 death; and

15 (iii) Return the report of death to the funeral home within two  
16 calendar days.

17 (b) If the death appears to be the result of unlawful or  
18 unnatural causes, the coroner or medical examiner shall:

19 (i) Attest to the cause, place, and date of death;

20 (ii) Note that there was no medical attendance at the time of  
21 death;

22 (iii) Note when the cause of death is pending investigation; and

23 (iv) Return the report of death to the funeral director, funeral  
24 establishment, or person having the right to control the disposition  
25 of the human remains under RCW 68.50.160 within two calendar days.

26 (7) When there is no funeral director, funeral establishment, or  
27 person having the right to control the disposition of human remains  
28 under chapter 68.50 RCW, the coroner, medical examiner, or local  
29 health officer shall file the completed report of death with the  
30 local registrar as required by subsection (2) of this section.

31 (8) When a coroner or medical examiner determines that there is  
32 sufficient circumstantial evidence to indicate that an individual has  
33 died in the county or in waters contiguous to the county, and that it  
34 is unlikely that the body will be recovered, the coroner or medical  
35 examiner shall file a report of death, including the cause, place,  
36 and date of death, to the extent possible.

37 (9) The coroner or medical examiner in a county in which a  
38 decedent was last known to be alive may file a report of death with  
39 the local registrar when the county in which the presumed death  
40 occurred cannot be determined with certainty. The coroner or medical

1 examiner shall file a report of death, including the cause, place,  
2 and date of death, to the extent possible.

3 (10) The coroner or medical examiner having jurisdiction may  
4 release information contained in a report of death according to RCW  
5 68.50.300.

6 (11) The local registrar shall:

7 (a) Review filed reports of death to ensure completion in  
8 accordance with this chapter;

9 (b) Request missing information or corrections;

10 (c) Ensure issuance of the burial-transit permit as required  
11 under RCW 70.58A.210;

12 (d) Register a report of death with the department if it has been  
13 completed and submitted in accordance with this section.

14 (12) A medical certifier, coroner, medical examiner, or local  
15 health officer shall submit an affidavit of correction to the state  
16 registrar to amend the report of death within five calendar days of  
17 receipt of an autopsy result or other information that completes or  
18 amends the cause of death from that originally filed with the  
19 department.

20 (13) The department may require a medical certifier, coroner,  
21 medical examiner, or local health officer to provide additional or  
22 clarifying information to properly code and classify cause of death.

23 (14)(a) A family member that is a qualified applicant for  
24 purposes of RCW 70.58A.530 may request a correction to the manner of  
25 death listed on a family member's death certification by notifying  
26 the applicable clerk of the court as required in section 2 of this  
27 act when the following conditions are met:

28 (i) A death is determined to be caused by an opioid-related drug  
29 overdose;

30 (ii) The reported manner of death is not listed as a homicide on  
31 the death certificate; and

32 (iii) An individual is convicted of controlled substance homicide  
33 under RCW 69.50.415 in connection with the death.

34 (b) A coroner or medical examiner shall submit an affidavit  
35 correcting the manner of death to a homicide within 10 calendar days  
36 of receiving notice from the clerk of the court as required in  
37 section 2 of this act.

38 NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 2.32 RCW  
39 to read as follows:

1       When a conviction in a controlled substances homicide case under  
2 RCW 69.50.415 has occurred, and upon receiving a request from a  
3 family member that is a qualified applicant for purposes of RCW  
4 70.58A.530 as provided in RCW 70.58A.200, the clerk of the court  
5 shall provide the judgment and sentence from the controlled  
6 substances homicide case to the coroner or medical examiner in the  
7 county where the death in connection to the conviction occurred  
8 within 30 calendar days of the request.

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