

MANAGEMENT OF UNCLAIMED REMAINS	Central, Eastern Rural, Eastern Urban, Labrador Grenfell and Western Zones II-PH4-10.11.12.13.140-020
Approver(s)	Glenda Webber, Vice President Mental Health and Addictions and Correctional Health Services and Chief Operating Officer – Eastern Signed by Glenda Webber Dated: May 28, 2026
Portfolio/Program/Department of Administrative Responsibility	Eastern Urban Zone Primary Health Care - Operations
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Level	Two (II)
Original Approval Date	May 28, 2026
Effective/Posted Date(s)	May 28, 2026
Scheduled Review Date(s)	May 28, 2027
Date(s) Versions Signed	N/A

Purpose

This policy provides direction for the management of Unclaimed Remains within Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) Health Services that:

- outlines the processes for next of kin (NOK) identification, notification, storage, and Final Disposition;
- promotes collaboration with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME);
- ensures compliance with applicable legislation; and
- maintains NL Health Services' commitment to uphold dignity and respect for the deceased.

Scope

This document applies to:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provincial	<input type="checkbox"/> Labrador-Grenfell	<input type="checkbox"/> Western	<input type="checkbox"/> Central
	<input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Rural	<input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Urban	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (as specified below)	

This policy is applicable to all staff responsible for the handling, documentation, and disposition of Unclaimed Remains within NL Health Services' facilities.

Definitions & Acronyms

Terms / Acronyms	Definitions / Descriptions
Due Diligence Legal Questionnaire (DDLQ)	A tool used by NL Health Services' staff, typically a social worker, to document efforts to locate NOK or an executor for a deceased person. It includes questions about family, executors, wills, and known wishes to ensure all reasonable steps are taken before remains are considered unclaimed.
Final Disposition	The burial, cremation, or other legally sanctioned method of managing a deceased individual's remains when unclaimed.
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner	OCME
Unclaimed Remains (UCR)	A deceased individual for whom no next of kin, legal representative, or other responsible party has been identified or is willing to take responsibility.

Policy Statements

Unclaimed Remains must be managed:

- utilizing a person-centered approach that upholds the dignity of the deceased by respecting their cultural and religious beliefs.
- in compliance with provincial government regulations (see Related Resources) and NL Health Services' organizational ethical standards.

Efforts must be made to prioritize the identification and notification of NOK who may be entitled to claim the body of a deceased person within the legally mandated timeframe as per the [Provincial Health Authority Act](#).

Remains that were initially identified as unclaimed may be claimed by the following NOK:

- **Spouse** - as defined in the [Family Law Act](#)
- **Children** - over the age of 19
- **Parents** - if no spouse or children are available
- **Siblings** - if no spouse, children, or parents are available
- **Grandparents, Grandchildren**
- **Aunts, Uncles, Nieces and Nephews**

If no NOK is identified during the due diligence process, NL Health Services' staff must liaise with the OCME regarding the Final Disposition of Unclaimed Remains.

All Unclaimed Remains must be stored in an NL Health Services morgue for a period as determined by the OCME before arrangements for Final Disposition are made.

Procedures and Accountabilities

NOK Identification & Public Notification:

- When remains have been initially identified as unclaimed, the Eastern Urban Zone (EUZ) Operations Manager is contacted.
- The designated Social Worker (for the applicable area) completes the following within a 14-day timeframe to attempt identification of the NOK:
 - reviews available electronic health records (Corcare, Client and Referral Management System (CRMS), Resident Assessment Instrument (RAI) etc.)
 - contacts other well-known community agencies (Department of Children, Seniors, and Social Development [CSSD], Connections for Seniors, etc.)
 - contacts Income Support Services.
 - finalizes the Due Diligence Legal Questionnaire (DDLQ; see Related Resources) and then sends it to the EUZ Operations Manager.

NOTE: If NOK are identified, they are provided with financial options such as income support to claim the remains.

- **Following completion of the DDLQ:**
 - If a NOK is not identified, or refuses to accept responsibility for the remains, the EUZ Operations Manager ensures the official notification process (see Appendix A) begins with public notification on the NL Health Services' website of 5 days and removed promptly.
 - The EUZ Operations Manager is responsible for following up on any inquiries related to claiming the remains (see Appendix B).
 - NL Health Services is not responsible for conducting further searches to locate NOK to claim the remains following the total 19-day timeframe.

Coordination with the OCME:

- Following the 5-day notification on the NL Health Services' website, the OCME is consulted regarding the disposition of the remains.
- The EUZ Operations Manager emails the following to the OCME:
 - the completed electronic death notification (EDN), and
 - the Consultation with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner form (see Related Resources).
- NL Health Services staff follow the recommendations of the OCME.

Final Disposition Arrangements:

- The EUZ Operations manager oversees final arrangements with the contracted funeral home for burial or cremation.
- Any special circumstances (e.g., religious or cultural considerations) are noted if known. These considerations are respected and accommodated by NL Health

Services when feasible, through consultation with Pastoral Care and Ethics departments as needed.

- Known personal effects on the body are recorded by the contracted funeral home.
- The Authorization for Release of Ashes or Burial of Remains form (see Related Resources) is completed and provided to the contracted funeral home by the EUZ Operations Manager who ensures its completion.
- A name marker must be provided for all buried remains, including cremated remains.
- The EUZ Operations Manager contacts family or friends if they have requested to attend the burial to inform them of applicable details.
- A designated NL Health Services staff member must attend the burial.

Documentation:

All completed forms and documentation related to NOK identification and notification, management and Final Disposition of the remains are submitted to Corporate Information Management.

Referenced and Sourced Materials

- Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015, SNL2015, c. A-1.2. Retrieved from the Office of the Legislative Counsel Newfoundland and Labrador website: <https://assembly.nl.ca/legislation/sr/statutes/a01-2.htm>
- Family Law Act, 1990. Retrieved from the Office of the Legislative Counsel Newfoundland and Labrador website: <https://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/f02.htm>
- Fatalities Investigation Act SNL, SNL1995, c.F-6.1. Retrieved from the Office of the Legislative Counsel Newfoundland and Labrador website: https://assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/f06-1.htm#17_1
- Personal Health Information Act, SNL2008, c. P-7.01. Retrieved from the Office of the Legislative Counsel Newfoundland and Labrador website: <https://assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/p07-01.htm#4>
- Provincial Health Authority Act, SNL2022, c. P-30.1. Retrieved from the Office of the Legislative Counsel Newfoundland and Labrador website: <https://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/p30-1.htm>
- Vital Statistics Act, SNL2009, c. V-6.01. Retrieved from the Office of the Legislative Counsel Newfoundland and Labrador website: <https://assembly.nl.ca/legislation/sr/statutes/v06-01.htm#15>

Related Resources

- [Authorization for Release of Ashes or Burial of Remains form](#)
- [Consultation with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner form](#)
- [Due Diligence Legal Questionnaire](#)

Appendix A

Process for Posting the Notification for Unclaimed Remains

1. Prepare the Notification Content Using the Standard Template

Include:

- Name
- Age
- Date of death
- Place of death
- Last known community of residence (if available)
- Reason for notification
- Deadline to respond
- Region

2. Submit the Posting Request

- Send email to: webmaster@nlhealthservices.ca
- Copy (cc): Director of Operations-EUZ
- Subject Line: Unclaimed Remains Posting
- Attach or paste the content directly into the email body

3. Operations Program EUZ- Operations Manager and Clerk Responsibilities

Monitor Email and Voicemail for Inquiries

- An email and phone number is provided on the webpage for public inquiries following notification of remains that may be unclaimed.
 - The email is as follows: FinalArrangements@nlhealthservices.ca
 - The phone number is as follows: 709-725-7474
- The manager or designated clerical staff must check the inbox multiple times daily (minimum 3 times: morning, midday, late afternoon).
- Ensure the automatic reply states: "This inbox is monitored Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m."

Appendix B

Guidelines for Inquiries Following Public Posting of Unclaimed Remains

1. Acknowledge the Inquiry (completed by clerical staff)

- Respond within 1 business day of receiving the inquiry.
- Thank the individual for contacting NL Health Services.
- Clarify the purpose of their inquiry (e.g., are they seeking to claim remains, provide information, or are they a general inquirer?)

2. Gather and Record Information

- Ask the inquirer to provide the following (if not already provided):
 - full name
 - contact information (phone and email)
 - relationship to the deceased
- Record all details.
- If the inquiry is related to claiming the remains, notify the EUZ Operations Manager.

3. For inquiries Not Related to Claiming of the Remains

- Inform the individual that they can attend the burial if they wish. Advise that they will be contacted with the date and time of the burial.

Key Notes

- Maintain a log of inquiries received.
- Do not delay final disposition based on inquiries unless a family member will be claiming the remains prior to cremation.
- Once the social worker has completed the DDLQ, there is no requirement to complete extended searches for additional family members beyond the 14-day due diligence period.

Always maintain confidentiality and professionalism.