

# Sample Policy and Procedures: Fetal and Infant Death

## Use for any infant born with signs of life or for stillborn fetus 20 weeks or more or 350 grams or more

### POLICY

1. Expired fetal and neonatal bodies shall be treated with dignity and respect.
2. Care, support, and guidance is provided to the patient and family experiencing perinatal death in a flexible manner, allowing for individual expression of grief.

*Nonessential material removed from this portion.*

### PROCEDURE

#### Final Disposition

29. Call security to notify them of any stillbirth or neonatal death. Each death is entered into a morgue logbook. Information needed includes: name of expired, date and time of death, mortuary (including location), if medical examiner has been notified, teaching or non-teaching case, and if baby is to have autopsy.
30. The remains of all expired infants/fetuses are taken to the pathology department in the lab.
31. Discuss final disposition plans with the mother/family of the baby. Burial or cremation is required by the State of \_\_\_\_\_ for all live births, and for stillborns gestational age 20 weeks or more or 350 gram weight or more. Parents are responsible for contacting and making arrangements with a funeral director. A list of funeral homes is available. Many funeral homes and cemeteries will bury baby for free or at a reduced rate and parents have the benefit of having control through planning the burial. This facilitates the work of grieving and helps parents' progress towards closure.
32. Obtain mother's signature on the Authorization for Release of Body form (on reverse side of Perinatal Expiration Checklist) indicating chosen mortuary and witness signature. This form **must** be signed prior to the mother leaving the hospital. If the mother is unable to sign, the father of the baby may sign the release if the parents are married, or a paternity affidavit has been completed. The completed release form and expiration checklist stay on the mother's chart. Notify Security and the pathology department per phone of the patient's chosen mortuary if not previously done. For private burial, the mortuary calls Security to schedule pickup of body. Logbook information is checked by security department prior to release of body to the indicated mortuary.
33. The body may also be transferred to an out-of-town mortuary by an authorized family member if requested by the family to avoid the expense of hiring the mortuary to transport. See "Transportation of Deceased Baby by Other Than a Licensed Mortician." Call pathology to prepare the body.
34. Assisted burial: In the case of financial hardship, other arrangements for burial can be made. A designated mortuary with whom we have an agreement will provide burial at \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery in a special section called "Babyland." After burial, families can get the exact burial location of their infant from the cemetery office. Grave stones or other memorials can be purchased at a later date if the family desires. Nursing completes the paperwork for assisted burial, or pastoral care can be contacted for assistance. Complete the following steps:
  - A. Assess the patient for financial ability to provide burial.
  - B. Provide the patient/family with an information sheet (blue sheet) about the process and a map to the \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery. Share information with the family that other mortuaries may provide free or low cost services with more options available, such as a graveside service.
  - C. Authorization for Release of Body form is signed by the mother and witnessed. This form must be signed prior to the mother's discharge. The current designated mortuary with whom we have an agreement is noted as the Mortuary to pick up remains. The release form always stays with mother's chart (reverse side of Perinatal Expiration Checklist).
  - D. Complete Lot Owner's order for Interment as follows:
    1. First line in top section, indicating infant name, sex, age, date of birth, etc.

2. Box on right side in bottom section labeled #2 including signature of relative of deceased, relative's address and phone number, and initials of witness.
- E. Place an orange Assisted Burial sticker on the Interment form and on the baby container. This notifies Security, pathology and designated mortuary of assisted burial.
- F. The following paperwork is taken to the lab to be given to the designated mortuary:
  1. Signed original interment form
  2. Copy of the Vital Statistics worksheet
  3. Death Certificate which has been completed by the physician (only if the infant was a live birth)
- G. Lab personnel notify the designated mortuary for pickup of the remains.

**Use for fetus less than 20 weeks gestation and less than 350 grams with no signs of life**

**POLICY**

1. Expired fetal and neonatal bodies shall be treated with dignity and respect.
2. Care, support, and guidance is provided to the patient and family experiencing perinatal death in a flexible manner, allowing for individual expression of grief.

*Nonessential material removed from this portion.*

**PROCEDURE**

**Final Disposition**

21. Prior to discharge, the mother chooses a disposition for her baby's remains. A release of body is completed indicating release to [the hospital] or to a private mortuary.
22. Inform patient that our **routine disposition** of the

fetus is burial in \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery, unless they opt for private burial. Burial is in a group grave and is completed intermittently throughout the year. The cemetery does not maintain records related to group burial, and these grave sites are not individually marked. Parents may visit the general area called "Babyland" as they desire. Obtain mother's signature on the Authorization for Release of Body to [the hospital] and witness signature. This form is on the back side of the Miscarriage Checklist and remains on the mother's chart after completion.

23. Parents who desire **private burial** for a miscarried fetus are responsible for contacting and making arrangements with a funeral director. A list of funeral homes is available. Many funeral homes and cemeteries will bury expired fetus/baby for free or at a reduced rate.
24. Obtain mother's signature on the Authorization for Release of Body for private burial indicating chosen mortuary and witness signature. This form is on the back of the Miscarriage Checklist and remains on the mother's chart after completion.
25. Call security to notify them of miscarriage only if **private burial** is requested so that they can enter the fetus into their morgue logbook. Information needed includes: Name of expired, date and time of death, mortuary (including location), if medical examiner has been notified (not required for miscarriage), teaching or non-teaching case, and if fetus is to have autopsy. For private burial, mortuary calls security to schedule pickup of body. Logbook information is checked by security department prior to release of body to the indicated mortuary.
26. The remains may also be transferred to an out-of-town mortuary by an authorized family representative if requested by the family to avoid the expense of hiring the mortuary to transport. See "Transportation of Deceased Infant by Other Than a Licensed Mortician" policy. Call pathology to prepare the body for transport.