

BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE

DEATH IN CUSTODY REPORTING ACT (DCRA)

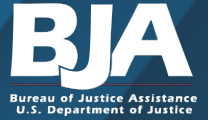
HOW TO REPORT ARREST-RELATED DEATHS

September 2023



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice

What Is an Arrest-Related Death?

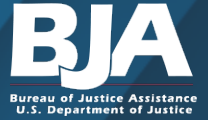


This is part of a training series of videos designed to help states comply with Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA; [Public Law 113-242](#)).

This video will cover the following topics:

- What is included as an arrest-related death under DCRA?
- Nonreportable scenarios
- How to report manner of death
- How to report brief circumstances

What Data Must State Administering Agencies Report?



For each arrest-related death, State Administering Agencies (SAAs) must submit the following:

- The name, gender, race, ethnicity, and birth year of the deceased
- The date, time, and location of death
- The name of the law enforcement agency that detained, arrested, or was in the process of arresting the decedent
- A brief description of the circumstances surrounding the death

Reportable Deaths

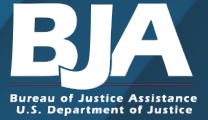


In addition to deaths of individuals who are detained, the DCRA law requires states to report the deaths of individuals who were either **detained** or **under arrest**, who died during the **process of being arrested**, or who died **en route to being incarcerated**.

If a death occurs ***during*** the following scenarios, it is reportable under DCRA:

- Serving a warrant
- Conducting a traffic stop
- Performing a welfare check
- During a police pursuit (including passengers in the car being pursued)
- While actively arresting the individual
- While transporting an arrested individual to a police department

Nonreportable Deaths

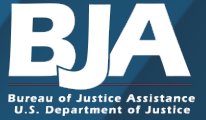


The following are **not reportable** under DCRA:

- Death following terminated police pursuit
- Fatal car accidents with no police involvement
- Overdoses occurring prior to police involvement
- Bystander deaths
- Homicides not involving law enforcement
- Deaths of law enforcement officers
- Welfare checks where the decedent is dead upon officers' arrival to scene

Additional examples of nonreportable and reportable death scenarios can be found in the Reporting Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions resource: <https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/performance-measures/DCRA-Reporting-Guidance-FAQs.pdf>

How to Correctly Report Arrest-Related Deaths



Facility Type

"None of the above" should be selected in Question 3D (Facility Type) for deaths occurring during process of arrest.

- This includes deaths that occur later at a hospital as a direct result from use of force or other circumstances surrounding the decedent's arrest.

Agency

The name of the police department responsible for arresting the individual should be entered in the open-text response for Question 4.

- Spell out the **full name** of the agency; do not abbreviate.

D. If the event causing the death occurred in any of the following facilities, please indicate the appropriate facility below. If the event causing the death did not occur in one of the facilities listed below, please use the "None of the above" answer choice

- 1. Municipal or county jail
- 2. State prison
- 3. State-run boot camp prison
- 4. Contracted boot camp prison
- 5. Any state or local contract facility
- 6. Other local or state correctional facility (to include any juvenile facilities)
- 7. None of the above

4. Please list the name of the department or agency that detained, arrested, or was in the process of arresting the deceased

A. Agency Name:

How to Correctly Code Manner of Death

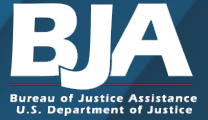


When selecting a manner of death for Question 5, refer to the following table:

Manner of Death	Scenario
Use of Force by Law Enforcement	Includes but not limited to: death results from officer deployment of gun or taser, restraint, physical altercation, Precision Immobilization Technique (PIT) maneuver, or Tactical Vehicle Intervention (TVI).
Accident	Includes but not limited to: car accident occurring during police pursuit, not due to police intervention (such as PIT maneuver).
Suicide	Includes but not limited to: Decedent uses own weapon to commit suicide after law enforcement presence has been established.
Natural Causes	Includes but not limited to: Decedent is arrested without incident (no taser, physical altercation, etc.) but suffers a heart attack while in transport to the police station.
Other – Overdose	Includes but not limited to: Decedent swallows a baggie during traffic stop, begins convulsing, and later dies due to fentanyl toxicity.
Unavailable, investigation pending	Incident remains under investigation.

Note that the terms “execution” and “homicide” are never used for arrest-related deaths; homicide is used only for deaths resulting from an altercation between two or more incarcerated individuals.

Brief Circumstances



Brief circumstances will be considered sufficient if the following details are provided:

- **Who:** provide the number of individuals involved in any altercations preceding death (e.g., law enforcement officers on scene).
- **What:** provide a more specific manner of death (e.g., asphyxiation due to being placed in prone position while restrained, etc.).
- **When:** provide a general time of day that the death occurred (e.g., morning, afternoon, overnight).
- **Where:** provide the location of the decedent (e.g., scene of arrest).
- **Why:** provide why initial contact was made with the decedent, whether he or she was armed or resisting arrest, etc.

Sufficient vs. Insufficient Brief Circumstances



Manner	Insufficient	Sufficient
Death attributed to use of force by a law enforcement	Taser	On 08/17/2020 at approximately 11:30 a.m., Santa Fe Police attempted to arrest John Doe for a parole violation when he became aggressive with officers and started wielding a bat. The officers verbally advised John Doe to drop the bat, or they would deploy their taser. John Doe then dropped the bat, pulled out a knife from his back pocket, and charged at an officer. One officer deployed their service weapon, hitting John Doe twice in the abdomen. EMS responded, however John Doe died on scene.
Accident	Motor vehicle pursuit	On 01/30/2020 at approximately 7:15 p.m., two Lake County Sheriff Department squad cars began pursuing a stolen 2019 BMW X5. Additional units responded. The driver increased his speed to over 120 mph and crashed into a median. The driver and front seat passenger were both ejected from the vehicle. The front seat passenger sustained serious injuries, and the driver was declared dead at the scene.
Suicide	Gunshot wound to head	On 11/22/2020 at 11:00 a.m., Jane Doe contacted New York City Police dispatch to report her husband, John Doe, whom she has an active order of protection against, was threatening her with a gun. Two NYPD units were sent to respond to the scene. Officers gave John Doe multiple verbal commands to drop the gun, however he expressed that he didn't want to live without his wife. At that moment, John Doe shot himself in the head. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Sufficient vs. Insufficient Brief Circumstances



Manner	Insufficient	Sufficient
Natural Causes	Natural death in law enforcement custody	On 05/23/2020, Jane Doe was arrested by the Polk County Sherriff's Office for aggravated assault after she attempted to stab another individual with a piece of broken glass. It was reported Jane Doe and the individual got into a heated argument, which then turned into a physical altercation. Jane Doe initially resisted arrest and fled on foot, and a deputy K9 was dispatched. She was taken to Winter Haven Hospital for treatment and suffered from a heart attack. Medical records show Jane Doe had a history of chest pains and shortness of breath. Jane Doe was pronounced dead at 01:22 p.m.
Other	Overdose	On 07/06/2020 at approximately 09:15 a.m., John Doe was arrested by the Kansas City Police Department for possession and intent to sell methamphetamine. While being processed at the Johnson County Jail, John Doe suffered heart failure. CPR was started, and staff radioed for medical personnel, however he expired at 12:30 p.m. Autopsy and toxicology reports show that John Doe had elevated levels of methamphetamine in his system.

Disclaimer: These examples are provided for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to imply any known reportable deaths.

Contact Information



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice



BJA PMT Helpdesk

Monday–Friday
8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Eastern Time
Closed on Federal Holidays
bjapmt@usdoj.gov

Contact Information



BJA
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Justice Information Resource Network

202-842-9330

www.jirn.org

DCRA@jirn.org

Thank you for your hard work and dedication.