

BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE

DEATH IN CUSTODY REPORTING ACT: HOW TO REPORT JAIL-BASED DEATHS

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How To Report Jail-Based Deaths



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

This presentation will cover the following topics:

- What is a municipal or county jail?
- Reporting requirements.
- How to correctly report municipal and county jails.
- How to correctly code manner of death.
- Non-reportable deaths.
- Brief circumstances.

What is a Municipal or County Jail?



- A jail or lockup operated by a county, city, village, or township.
- Jails confine persons before or after adjudication and are usually operated by local law enforcement authorities such as a sheriff, a police chief, or a county or city administrator. Persons confined in a jail facility following a criminal conviction are usually sentenced to an incarceration sentence of 1 year or less.

What Data Must State Administering Agencies Report?



For each jail-based 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 department or agency that had custody of the deceased.
- A brief description of the circumstances surrounding the death.

How To Correctly Report Municipal and County Jails



- Municipal and county jails, including privately operated jails contracted out by the state, should be reported as “municipal or county jail.”
- For example, Hempstead County Jail and Detention Center is operated by the Hempstead County Sheriff’s Office in Hempstead, AR. Decedent records should indicate **municipal or county jail** for Question 3D.*

*This example is provided for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to imply any known reportable death.

How To Correctly Code Manner Of Death



Manner of Death	Scenarios
Accident	Include but not limited to: motor vehicle fatality during jail transport, fall from bunk bed.
Death Attributed to Use Of Force by a Law Enforcement Officer or Corrections Officer	Include but not limited to: death resulting from being placed in prone position, tased, or having an adverse reaction to a chemical agent deployed by corrections officers.
Homicide	Include but not limited to: an altercation or fight between two incarcerated individuals.
Natural Causes	Include but not limited to: cancer, heart disease, liver disease, respiratory disease.
Other	Include but not limited to: fentanyl overdose, alcohol intoxication, drug or alcohol withdrawal, COVID-19, found unresponsive in cell (cause unknown).
Suicide	Include but not limited to: suffocation (e.g., hanging and self-strangulation), self-inflicted cuts or burns.

Note: Execution should never be selected for jail-related deaths.

Non-Reportable Deaths



Non-Reportable Deaths	Exceptions (Reportable)
Parole/Probation	Manner of death is use of force by law enforcement OR the individual has been paroled to finish their sentence in a halfway house contracted by the state and the death occurs within the facility are reportable.
Medical Parole/ Compassionate Release	Deaths occurring when an individual is on medical furlough but had been expected to return to custody following treatment are reportable. (e.g., if not for the precipitating event or underlying medical condition would the person still be in the correctional facility).
Work-Release	Deaths that occur within a work-release center under state contract are reportable. Deaths occurring outside of the facility are not reportable.
Ankle Monitor or Another Global Position System (GPS) Device	Only if death occurs during arrest.
Halfway House (Not Under State Contract)	Only if death occurs during arrest.
Police Officers/Corrections Officers	No exceptions. Deaths of law enforcement are reportable to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program.

For more information on non-reportable deaths, please review the [DCRA Reporting Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Brief Circumstances



- Each decedent's brief circumstances should include details leading to the death (e.g., the number and affiliation of parties involved in the incident, the location and characteristics of the incident, and any other context related to the death).
- If the death occurred outside the jail (e.g., hospital, transport, escape), provide the exact location of death in Question 3C and the name of the jail facility in which the decedent was in custody in Question 4. SAAs may also include the jail facility name in the brief circumstances.

Decedent Record Example



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Question 3C – Location of Death

- **Location name (if applicable):** University Medical Center
- **Street Address:** 1800 W Charleston Blvd
- **City:** Las Vegas
- **State:** NV
- **Zip code:** 89102

Question 4 – Custodial Department or Agency

- **Agency name:** City of Las Vegas Detention Center

Question 6 - Brief Circumstances

On August 30, 2022, John Doe was booked into the City of Las Vegas Detention Center. He was housed in a cell with three other individuals. At approximately 06:15 p.m. on October 5, 2022, John Doe and one of his cellmates got into a physical altercation. The cellmate hit John Doe repeatedly in the back of his head resulting in blunt force head trauma. Officers quickly responded to the scene and transported John Doe to University Medical Center for treatment. John Doe expired at 10:43 p.m.

Disclaimer: This example is provided for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to imply any known reportable death.

Insufficient vs. Sufficient Brief Circumstances



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Insufficient	Sufficient
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide no detail or very few details regarding the death in custody.• Analysts are unable to confirm whether the death is reportable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide clear details regarding the death in custody:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Who○ What○ When○ Where○ Why• Analysts can confirm the death is reportable.

Sufficient Brief Circumstances



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

- **Who:** number of individuals involved in any altercations preceding death (e.g., number of incarcerated individuals involved or law enforcement officers on scene).
- **What:** specific manner of death (e.g., end-stage liver disease, stab wounds from an altercation, asphyxiation due to being placed in prone position while restrained).
- **When:** general time of day that the death occurred (e.g., morning, afternoon, evening, overnight).
- **Where:** location of the decedent (e.g., jail cell, scene of altercation, medical facility).
- **Why:** if applicable, include why initial contact was made with the decedent (e.g., decedent was uncooperative during a routine safety check).

Insufficient vs. Sufficient Brief Circumstances Examples



Manner of Death	Insufficient	Sufficient
Accident	Accident	On July 3, 2021, Jane Doe had a seizure while sitting at a table in the dayroom of Elmore County Jail. She fell backwards, hitting her head on the concrete floor. Jane Doe was taken to the Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center where she later passed away at 5:44 p.m.
Death Attributed to Use of Force by a Law Enforcement or Corrections Officer	Prone Position	In the afternoon of March 13, 2023, officers were conducting a routine safety check at Lee County Jail. Officers requested John Doe to step outside of his cell, but he refused and attempted to block entry. Officers deployed a foam mace but John Doe continued to be combative. He was hit by a stun gun multiple times, and six officers were needed to restrain him. Once he was removed from the cell, it was discovered he was not breathing. Officers attempted life-saving measures but were unsuccessful. John Doe expired at 3:27 p.m.
Homicide	Altercation in Prison	On August 30, 2022, John Doe was booked into the City of Las Vegas Detention Center. He was housed in a cell with three other individuals. At approximately 06:15 p.m. on October 5, 2022, John Doe and one of his cellmates got into a physical altercation. The cellmate hit John Doe repeatedly in the back of his head resulting in blunt force head trauma. Officers quickly responded to the scene and transported John Doe to the University Medical Center for treatment. John Doe expired at 10:43 p.m.

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Insufficient vs. Sufficient Brief Circumstances Examples



Manner of Death	Insufficient	Sufficient
Natural Causes	Prolonged Illness	Jane Doe was found unresponsive in her cell on June 15, 2022, at approximately 08:30 a.m. at the Pinellas County Jail. Medical personnel began life-saving measures but were unsuccessful and declared Jane Doe dead at the scene. Jane Doe had a history of hypertensive heart disease.
Other	COVID-19	On September 20, 2021, John Doe was transported to St. Luke's North Hospital-Barry Road from the Platte County Sherriff's Office due to difficulty breathing. Medical staff diagnosed John Doe with COVID-19 and pneumonia. Over the next couple days his heath declined, and he expired on September 28, 2021, at 11:58 p.m.
Suicide	Suicide	Officers found Jane Doe hanging in her cell by a sheet ligature on April 18, 2022, at approximately 2:00 p.m. at the Dekalb County Jail.

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Contact Information



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Thank you for your hard work and dedication.