

Mortuary Science Ad Hoc Committee Minutes

AUGUST 8, 2023

Attendees

Committee Members

- Robert Archbold
- Marilaurice Hemlock
- Dominic Pierre
- Joe Sellwood
- Michael Sharkey
- Miki Tufto
- Jane Danner

MDH Staff

- Daphne Ponds (Chair)
- Jane Danner
- Robert Dehler
- Erika Fulgern
- Julianna Leintz
- Rick Michals
- Jodi Rothstein
- Marguerite Slonine
- Debbie Thao

Additions / Adoptions of Agenda

No additions noted. The agenda was adopted.

Staff Reports

Reports were presented; reports are available upon request by emailing health.mortsci@state.mn.us.

Old Business

MDH Licensing and Mort Sci Exam Updates – No updates

MDH Investigation, Inspection, and Letter of Non-Contagious Updates – MDH Program Staff

- 176 inspections that need to be complete by the end of August.
- 5 new investigation complaints since the last ad hoc meeting.
- 5 closed investigation complaints since the last ad hoc meeting.

MDH Staffing Updates

- An AmeriCorps Vista intern will begin at the end of August. Their primary work will consist of assisting the team with community engagement efforts, collecting data on the outreach to BIPOC communities and establishing a working relationship with them.

- Licensing, Credentialing and Registration has a new supervisor, credentialer, and mortuary science administrative support person.

New Business

Green Burial Study from 2023 Legislative Session.

- A moratorium in Minnesota began on July 1, 2023, prohibiting any new establishments from conducting green burial activities. The moratorium spans two years until July 1, 2025.
- The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Commissioner is tasked with conducting a study to determine the environmental and health impacts of green burial and natural organic reduction and develop recommendations to put forward to the Legislature. A request for proposal (RFP) is currently being drafted for public bids. The Commissioner will submit a report of the study results and recommendations, including any statutory changes needed to implement the recommendations, to the Chairs and ranking minority members of the Legislative committee. MDH has until February 1, 2025, to get the report to the Legislature.

Pre-Need Account Process Updates

- The MDH-Health Regulation Division (HRD) Licensing, Credentialing and Registration (LCR), Mortuary Science, and Budget Unit sections have been working together to create a standard operating procedure between the three sections to process pre-need account information.
- MDH-HRD believes there is likely under reporting by licensees who manage pre-need accounts. MDH-HRD plans to improve its data tracking and will be updating licensing application forms with more specific questions to solicit information from licensees who manage pre-need accounts. MDH-HRD intends to do some education for licensees to make sure licensees are disclosing whether they have pre-need accounts or not.

Tracking Alkaline Hydrolysis

- There was discussion about updating initial licensing and renewal funeral establishments forms to track those licensees participating in alkaline hydrolysis; MDH has not previously asked for this information.

Proposed Mortuary Science Advisory Council Draft Legislative Language

- At the May 2023 Committee meeting, the Committee discussed the possibility of formalizing the current Ad Hoc Committee structure to an Advisory Council with membership and duties outlined via statute. Advantages of outlining Advisory Council membership would be to gain more BIPOC licensee participation and public/consumer input. There was discussion that there was previously a Mortuary Science Advisory Council in the 1980s and 1990s, but that Council was later disbanded. MDH and the Committee discussed possible areas of an Advisory Council focus could be: training standards, community practice standards, emerging technology, existing laws and statutes, and industry trends.
- Daphne Ponds, Ad Hoc Chair, will provide updates on the proposed draft legislative language at the next meeting in November.

Next Meeting

- November 14, 2023

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08/08/2023

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