

**POLICY OF THE OFFICE OF THE CORONER REGARDING
NOTIFICATION OF NEXT-OF-KIN WHEN ORGANS MAY BE REMOVED AND
RETAINED BY THE CORONER AFTER AN AUTOPSY IS PERFORMED**

The following shall be the policy of the San Mateo County Coroner with regard to notification of next-of-kin when organs may be removed and retained when an autopsy is performed:

1. Whenever an autopsy is performed by or on behalf of the Office of the Coroner which may result in the retention of organs beyond the anticipated date of the release of the remains, the Coroner shall inform one or more of those persons identified in subdivision (a) of Section 7151 of the Health and Safety Code (hereinafter "next-of-kin") that there is a possibility that organs will be retained by the Office of the Coroner when remains are released for interment or other disposition, if the next of kin is known, and if not then a reasonable effort shall be made to locate the next of kin for purposes of making the notification. A reasonable effort will be made to give such notification with enough advance notice that the next-of-kin may make final plans based upon this information.
2. Notification of next-of-kin shall not be required if, in the opinion of the Coroner, such notification may compromise the integrity of an ongoing criminal investigation.
3. When, in the course of an autopsy or investigation, the Office of the Coroner anticipates that retention of organs may be necessary beyond the date of release of the remains of the deceased, the Office of the Coroner will inform the next-of-kin, and shall offer to return organs when no longer required for the purposes specified above.

Release of organs shall be made in compliance with any state or federal laws regarding the safe disposition and handling of organs.

4. The Office of the Coroner will retain organs only when required to determine the cause of death, when necessary because of an ongoing criminal investigation or criminal proceeding, when required by court order, or if otherwise required by law.

It shall be the general policy of the Office of the Coroner that it shall not retain any organs for scientific or investigative purposes not related to the Coroner's duty to inquire into and determine the cause and circumstances of death as provided by State law. If an organ is determined to be of interest for scientific or investigative purposes beyond that of determining the cause and circumstance of death as provided by State law, the Office of the Coroner shall obtain the consent of the next-of-kin prior to retaining the organ.