

investigations by the coroner

palliative care
and disability

southern metropolitan region palliative care consortium

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fact sheet series

Information for disability services staff working in group homes

when does the coroner get involved?

According to the Coroners Act of Victoria 2008 some categories of death must be reported to the coroner for further investigation. One of these categories is people who are 'held in care' such as people with disabilities living in Group Homes operated or funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS). Reportable deaths must be notified to the coroner regardless of whether the resident dies in the Group Home or in a hospital or palliative care inpatient service.

why does the coroner need to be involved?

Residents of Group Homes are included in the act as reportable deaths because they are vulnerable and dependent on the care of others. It is important to determine a cause of death and to make sure that they were cared for appropriately during the time they have been in the care of the state. The coroner also has a responsibility to determine if the death was preventable and can recommend systemic changes in the care of vulnerable people.

what is the process?

Once it is ascertained that the resident has died, the medical practitioner or any other person present must call Coronial Admissions and Enquires (CA&E) immediately on 1300 309 519. The service operates 24 hours a day 7 days a week. CA&E staff will advise and support disability and medical staff as to what needs to be done at this time. In order to assist CA&E to complete the paperwork, Victoria Police may need to attend before the funeral director is contacted.

how can you minimise the impact for all involved?

It is important everyone involved in the resident's care is aware before the resident dies that their death will be a reportable death to minimize any confusion and distress at the time of death. Early case planning and discussions with family, disability and medical staff can ensure that everyone understands the process and is aware of the reasons why this will occur.

more resources?

- www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/find/faqs/reportable+deaths+faqs
- www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/residential-services-practice-manual
- www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/disability-residential-service-palliative-care-guide

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