

When to Contact the Iowa Board of Medicine with a Complaint About a Physician's Responsibility for the Medical Certification and Signing an Iowa Certificate of Death

As the holder of an Iowa physician's license to practice, the Iowa Board of Medicine is concerned if there is a long-standing issue with the same physician being delayed time and time again in his or her duties to sign a death certificate. The Board has had only a few of these cases and is sympathetic to the complainant. These particular delays were 45 days, 70 days, and in one case even longer, in the time it took to get a certificate from the physician, which caused a great hardship on the families. The board did take action in these cases because the reasoning behind the delays by those physicians was not satisfactory.

While a complaint may be lodged at any time, only flagrant, habitual violations of time and/or duty will be looked into – i.e., a one-time issue generally does not warrant an investigation. When in doubt, a funeral home may call, but please be aware that the Board cannot get involved when the physician simply needs prompted to sign a certificate.

Again, chronic issues with delays, the same physician who delays time and time again – those are the issues the Board can deal with most directly and have a longer shelf life and paper trail; rather than instances involving immediate issues at hand.

Anyone with concerns about habitual problems with a physician is encouraged to contact the Iowa Board of Medicine at 515-242-3252.

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