What is the Coroner's Office and why is it involved in this death?
The Coroner’s Office is directed by the coroner, an elected official, who must be a medical doctor in Louisiana. The job of the coroner, by law, is to investigate the circumstances of certain types of deaths in order to determine the cause of death and the manner of death.

Cases which require a coroner’s investigation are:
- Sudden, unexpected death when in apparent good health.
- Death of a person who is not under the recent care of a physician.
- Any unusual or unexplained death.

Are autopsies always performed in coroner’s cases?
No. A coroners investigator gathers the information concerning the circumstances of death, the medical history, and the social history. If there is sufficient medical history and the circumstances of death are consistent with a death due to the known medical problems, and if there is no evidence of foul play, an autopsy is not usually performed. If, however, there is any evidence of foul play or if the circumstances of the death are unusual, an autopsy is usually performed to determine the cause of death and the manner of death.

NOTE: The decision to perform an autopsy rests with the Coroner’s Office. Family objections may be noted, but an autopsy may be required to help determine the cause and manner of the death.

If there is no suspicion of foul play and there is natural disease sufficient to account for the demise, the Coroner’s Office may release the body to the funeral home without an autopsy. If the family wants an autopsy in these cases, they may contact a private pathologist for a private autopsy. Private autopsy services may be obtained through LSU and Tulane Medical School Departments of Pathology or from other private pathologists. There is a fee for private autopsies which varies depending upon the pathologist. There is no charge to the family for a coroner’s autopsy. An autopsy will not prevent an open casket funeral.

Where will the body of my loved one be taken?
The body will be taken to the Jefferson Parish Forensic Center, 2018 8th Street, Harvey, Louisiana.

When will my loved one be released from the Coroner’s Office?
The body will be released to the funeral home of your choice following completion of the autopsy. Depending upon the day of the week and the time of day that the coroner is notified of the death, the body may be released on the day of notification or the next day (except on Saturday when the body will be held until Monday since autopsies are not routinely performed on Sunday). Occasionally the body may be held longer in cases where additional investigation is required.

Is it necessary for me to go to the Coroner's Office to identify the body?
No. In most cases visual identification is not required. If it is, you will be notified by the Coroner’s Office.

Is viewing or visitation allowed at the Coroner's Office?
Not routinely. The Coroner's Office is not designed to handle bereaved relatives. Only in extremely unusual and rare circumstances is viewing allowed on a very limited basis at the Coroner’s Office. Arrangements for viewing at the funeral home should be made with the funeral director.

Why are tubes and other medical devices left in place of the body?
Placement of tubes is checked at autopsy. The presence of blood and other material is often left on the body because it may aid in the investigation.

What do I do now?
As soon as possible, a funeral home should be selected to handle the arrangements. When you contact the funeral director, advise them that the deceased is under the jurisdiction of the Jefferson Parish Coroner’s Office. The funeral director will contact our office and make arrangements to have your loved one picked up.

How do I obtain a copy of the death certificate?
Death certificates are not issued by the Coroner’s Office. You may request a copy from the funeral home when arrangements are made.

How long does it take for the death certificate to be completed?
If the cause and manner of death are obvious following completion of the gross autopsy, the death certificate may be completed as soon as it is sent from the funeral home to our office. In some cases additional tests may be required to determine the cause of death and manner of death such as toxicology and microscopic studies. In these cases, completion of the death certificate will not be possible until the additional studies are completed, which may take 4-8 weeks and very rarely longer.

When will the autopsy report be ready and how do I obtain a copy?
When all studies are complete, the autopsy report will be finalized and signed by the pathologist who did the autopsy. This generally takes a few days to several weeks from the date of death and the manner of death. Copies of the autopsy report may be obtained from the Coroner’s Office after the appropriate requisition form is completed and fees received. Autopsy reports on cases under investigation are not public records and are not released to anyone other than law enforcement agencies.

NOTE: No fee is charged to the legal next of kin for a list of findings and summary.