



**1. What is the difference between a “certified” and an “uncertified” copy of a death certificate?**

A **certified** copy of a death certificate issued by a Wisconsin Vital Records Office will have a raised seal, will show the signature of the State or Local Registrar, and will be printed on security paper. A certified copy may be required to settle an estate or to claim insurance benefits.

State law restricts who may obtain a **certified** copy of a death certificate. A **certified** copy can only be issued to those people with a “direct and tangible interest” (section II, categories A – C) which means the following people:

- An immediate family member defined as a parent (whose name is on the death certificate and whose parental rights have not been terminated), current spouse, brother, sister, grandparent, child, or current domestic partner (Declaration of Domestic Partnership registered in the Wis. Vital Records System under Chapter 770, Wis. Stats.) of the subject of the record (section II, category A).
- NOTE: Grandchildren, step-parents, step-children, step-brothers and step-sisters can only obtain certified copies as section II, categories B and C.
- A person authorized in writing by one of the above. A written and notarized authorization must be attached to this application and the authorization must clearly state the relationship of the authorizing party to the subject of the record (section II, category B).
- A person who can demonstrate that the death certificate is required to determine or to protect a personal or property right (section II, category C). Proof is required.

If you do not meet one of the above criteria, you cannot receive a **certified** copy of a death certificate.

An **uncertified** copy will contain the same information as a certified copy but it is **not** acceptable for legal purposes, such as claiming insurance benefits (section II, category D).

- For pre-2003 death certificates, an **uncertified** copy of a death certificate will contain the same information as a certified copy.
- For death certificates 2003 to the present, only persons named in categories A – C on the previous page may have access to information which includes cause of death.

	PRE-2003 DEATH CERTIFICATES	2003 TO PRESENT DEATH CERTIFICATES
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CERTIFIED COPY</b></p> <p>A certified copy has a raised seal, will show the signature of the State Registrar, and will be printed on security paper. It can be used for legal purposes, such as settling an estate or claiming insurance benefits.</p>	<p><u>TYPE OF CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE</u> Extended Fact of Death *</p> <p><u>TYPE OF RECIPIENT</u> Must have a “direct and tangible interest”</p>	<p><u>TYPE OF CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE</u> Fact of Death ** Extended Fact of Death *</p> <p><u>TYPE OF RECIPIENT</u> Must have a “direct and tangible interest”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>UNCERTIFIED COPY</b></p> <p>(An uncertified copy is for informational purposes only; It CANNOT be used for legal purposes.)</p>	<p><u>TYPE OF CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE</u> Extended Fact of Death *</p> <p><u>TYPE OF RECIPIENT</u> Anyone</p>	<p><u>TYPE OF CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE</u> Fact of Death **</p> <p><u>TYPE OF RECIPIENT</u> Anyone</p>
<p>* <b>Extended Fact of Death Certificate.</b> Cause of death included; can be used for insurance benefit claims.                  ** <b>Fact of Death Certificate.</b> No cause of death included; can be used for banking and most other financial transactions.</p>		

**2. How long will it take to process my request?**

Copies of death certificates are available from the State Vital Records Office no less than 3 weeks from the date of the death.

**Applying in Person**

- Requests for **certified** copies of death certificates are usually completed within 2 business hours of application, if the death certificate is on file.
- Requests for **uncertified** copies of death certificates are not completed on the same schedule as requests for certified copies. In-person requests for uncertified copies may take up to 1 month to complete.

**Applying by Mail**

- Requests for **certified** copies of death certificates may take up to 2 weeks plus mail time to complete.
- Requests for **uncertified** copies of death certificates are not completed on the same schedule as certified copies. Mail requests for uncertified copies may take up to 1 month plus mail time.

**3. What identification is required when applying for a death certificate?**

A **photocopy** of the applicant’s ID as listed below must be submitted with all mail applications. ID as listed below is required when applying in-person.

**At least one form of ID must show your name and address. Expired cards or documents will not be accepted.**

Acceptable forms of identification are:

**One of these:**

- Wisconsin driver’s license
- Wisconsin ID card
- Out-of-state driver’s license or ID card

**OR**

- US government issued photo ID
- Passport
- Check book/bank statement

**Two of these:**

- Health insurance card
- Current, dated, signed lease
- Utility bill or traffic ticket
- Paycheck or earnings statement

**If you have questions regarding this form, please call  
or visit our website at**