



**BEXAR COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE**  
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*"Accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners"*

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**RESPONSE TO COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

The Bexar County Medical Examiner's Office receives quite a few queries regarding our role in the current COVID-19 outbreak. Briefly, in Texas the Medical Examiner has no role in known infectious natural disease outbreaks. Such deaths are not under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner under the law, so individuals dying from such a disease are not brought to the Medical Examiner for any type of examination, including an autopsy. Certification of these deaths rests with the treating physicians in the community, and surveillance and other issues are the responsibility of local health departments. This being said, in a widespread outbreak, it is likely that some individuals infected with a disease agent may die as a result of diseases that are under ME jurisdiction, such as motor vehicle mishaps, suicides, or assaults. In such cases, examinations and death certification in these cases will generally take place as if there was no infectious disease outbreak, and testing for the infection in the case of COVID-19 will not likely be done. However, select postmortem testing is being conducted at the BCMEO under the guidance of and in coordination with our local health department. This is not to say that the ME is not affected by disease outbreaks such as COVID-19. Such diseases cause concern among our staff just as in any other field, though our examinations are done using "universal precautions", the wearing of appropriate protective gear in all autopsies to protect against typical pathogenic organisms. We are also affected by the possibility of staffing shortages due to disease or vocational distancing measures, or by the potential for overwhelmed funeral homes due to increased deaths in the community. Interested individuals may find additional information about Medical Examiner roles (or lack thereof) in such disease outbreaks at the website of the National Association of Medical Examiners ([www.thename.org](http://www.thename.org)).

