

# The body is the most important piece of physical evidence you have.

- Document pronouncement of death. (Who pronounced and at what time?)
- potential evidence.
- Conduct walk-through for determination of
- Be aware of witnesses who may pose potential risks.
- evidence.)
- control of scene and protect against loss of
- Establish physical scene boundaries. (Maintain
- Determine the location of entire scene(s).

## 2. SECURE SCENE.

- Notify coroner or medical examiner if not on site.
- including those present and any other witnesses.
- Identify all witnesses to obtain statements, EMS, family, neighbors, etc.
- Maintain scene log of everyone on site, including
- Determine need for consent or search warrant.
- (Analyze scene: Is there evidence of a crime?)
- Determine nature and scope of investigation.
- or transported? Was evidence located elsewhere?)
- Identify scene(s). (Where was body found, placed,

## 1. RESPOND TO SCENE.

# DEATH INVESTIGATION GUIDE: SCENE RESPONSE

## WISCONSIN PRESCRIPTION DRUG MONITORING PROGRAM (PDMP)

### DUTY TO REPORT:

Law enforcement must submit an alert to the PDMP for the following events:

- Suspected narcotic-related death.
- Suspected opioid-related overdose (non-fatal).
- Suspected violation of the Controlled Substances Act involving a Monitored Prescription Drug.
- Report of stolen controlled substance.

**Alerts are used to inform health care professionals about their patients.**

### ACCESS FOR ACTIVE INVESTIGATIONS:

Law enforcement may request PDMP reports as an investigative tool under the following circumstances:

- Active investigation or prosecution of a violation involving prescribed controlled substances.
- Monitoring a patient as part of a drug court.

**More information and account access can be found at [www.pdmp.wi.gov](http://www.pdmp.wi.gov).**

## DEATH INVESTIGATION GUIDE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

### INVESTIGATE EVERY DEATH AS A HOMICIDE. CONSIDER ALL POSSIBILITIES: S-H-A-U-N

- **S**UICIDE - **H**OMICIDE - **A**CCIDENTAL -
- **U**NDETERMINED - **N**NATURAL -

### PARTNERSHIPS ARE ESSENTIAL.

**Work with your coroner or medical examiner to get as many details as possible.**

**Introductions at the scene help establish a collaborative investigative effort.**

### VICTIM'S DEMOGRAPHICS:

- Age, height, weight
- Marital or relationship status, sex of partner, sexual orientation
- Veteran status
- Sex, gender identity
- Race, ethnicity
- Current occupation
- Pregnancy status
- Unique features (e.g., scars)

**To complete victim background, fully open guide to back page.**



# VICTIM BACKGROUND

Here is what to include  
to complete victim background:

## CATEGORIES:

### SOCIAL, FINANCIAL RECORDS

### CRIMINAL HISTORY

### MEDICAL HISTORY

### INTERVIEWS

### MENTAL HEALTH

### FIREARM DEATHS\*

**DO A COMPLETE BACKGROUND ON EVERY VICTIM.**

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## SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL RECORDS

- Determine cellular phone carrier for victim's device, submit data preservation letter.
- Collect victim's phone. Check calls and messages if able; phone access may require search warrant.
- Check all social media accounts. (e.g., Facebook posts and messages, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
- Check laptop or computer, including sent and draft emails if able; also may require warrant.
- Evidence of final communication—with whom? What was the subject matter? (e.g., suicide note)
- Check bank and credit card records for activity (e.g., debt, sudden increase in spending, etc.)

## CRIMINAL HISTORY:

- History of incarceration (jail or prison), or arrest(s); **get official reports from arresting agencies**
- Past and/or pending criminal investigations and/or court case history

## MEDICAL HISTORY:

- Medication(s) on scene, prescription or over-the-counter?
- Known prescribed medication(s)
  - Name (oxycontin, etc.) and type (pills, patch, etc.)
  - Prescribed to decedent or other person?
  - Medication(s) taken as prescribed?
- Decedent living with disability or chronic health condition

## OVERDOSE (INDICATION OF DRUG USE):

- Evidence of injection—Track marks, needles, etc.
- Evidence of other route of administration—Snorting, smoking, transdermal, ingestion, suppository, etc.
- Evidence of illicit drugs—Powder, pills, tar, etc.
- Evidence of morphine prescription
- Any bystanders
- Naloxone administered? (By first responder, civilian?)

## SUBSTANCE USE:

- Current or history of substance use disorder
- Last known use of substance—Weeks or months?
- Last known overdose—Within last month? Year?
- Recent relapse—Within last two weeks? Longer?
- Recent stay in residential facility (period of sobriety)—e.g., jail or prison, treatment facility
- Living with person who is actively using substances

Use all of this to create a timeline  
around the decedent's time of death.

## INTERVIEWS:

- Identify and interview all close family members, significant others, friends, coworkers, etc.

## NEIGHBORHOOD CANVASSING:

- Did they know the victim? Ask who, what, how.
- Did they notice recent behavior changes (e.g., social isolation, increased or decreased activity to victim's residence?)
- Any observances around the time period of the event?

## MENTAL HEALTH:

- Current or past specific mental health diagnosis or issues (e.g., depression, anxiety, insomnia, etc.)
- Current or past treatment for mental health

## SUICIDE MARKERS:

- History of suicidal thoughts? (written or verbal)
- History of suicide attempts?
- Past or present disclosure of self-harm ("cutting")
- Emotional problems or sudden mood changes
- Physical evidence of self-harm
- Local crisis center contact
- Diagnosis of depression by any health care provider
- Victim under the influence of substance (e.g., alcohol)

## LIFE STRESSORS:

- Relationship problem(s) (e.g., partner, family member, etc.)
- Physical health problem(s) (e.g., chronic pain)
- History of sexual trauma
- Job, school, or financial problem(s)
- Eviction or loss of home
- Suicide, overdose, or death of friend or family
- Recent argument or physical fight
- Bullying or harassment (past or present)
- Recent relapse (non-substance addictions e.g., gambling)

## CHILDHOOD TRAUMAS:

- Physical abuse or neglect
- Emotional and/or verbal abuse or neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Physical needs neglected
- Parent experienced domestic abuse
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member
- Substance use or mental illness within home

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## IN CASE OF FIREARM DEATH(S), IDENTIFY:

- Firearm type (e.g., semi-automatic pistol or bolt-action rifle) and caliber/gauge
- Firearm make, model and serial number
- Firearm owner
- Was firearm stored loaded? Locked?
- How was firearm accessed and/or obtained?
- Condition of firearm upon arrival