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Area Provision of Care - Treatment and Services  
Applicability Highlands Ranch Hospital  
Document Type Operational Workflow

## Elective Adult or Fetal Autopsy (Non-Coroner Autopsy) Operational Workflow

### Introduction

Define steps in the process to request a non-coroner autopsy by the:

1. Physician, and/or
2. Family/legal next of kin (through the physician)

### Scope

View the Applicability to see where this operational workflow applies.

### Responsible Oversight Group

Patient Quality and Safety Committee

### Operational Workflow Details

#### A. Responsibility

1. House Supervisor: coordinates process
2. Pathology: obtains Pathology submitted specimens as appropriate

## B. Request for Autopsy

1. Once all other elements of the referenced policies have been addressed including, but not limited to, the Coroner having released the case declining to take jurisdiction, an autopsy can be requested.
  - a. Notify the physician and house supervisor of the request
  - b. Obtain signed authorization from the legal next of kin
  - c. Obtain direction from the legal next of kin regarding funeral home arrangements. Arrangement must be made prior to the transport for the off-site autopsy.

## C. Adult Autopsy

1. Adult Autopsies are performed by CU Medicine Department of Pathology.
  - a. Epic orders for Autopsy must be entered - LAB8070
2. The funeral home will be used to transport the body to the location of the Pathologist performing the autopsy.

## D. Fetal Autopsy

1. For gestational age of 20 weeks or greater Fetal autopsies are performed at Children's Hospital. Follow steps for handling.
  - a. Fetuses may remain on the unit with the mother.
    - i. The unit will need to contact the House Supervisor when transport to the morgue is needed.
  - b. The placenta and remains must be brought to the morgue prior to courier pick up for delivery to Children's Hospital. The placenta must remain with the fetus and accompany the fetus to Children's Hospital.
  - c. The fetus will be logged into the morgue for tracking.
  - d. Place fetus in a leak proof wrapping/infant body bag/bereavement container, or baby casket and place the placenta in a specimen container prior to or at the time of transfer to the morgue to wait for pick-up by the courier.
  - e. The House Supervisor will call Children's Hospital Pathology to inform them of an autopsy being sent.
    - i. Children's Hospital of Colorado Pathology: 720-777-6711
      1. Monday-Friday 0800-1700
      2. If autopsy is requested on a weekend, the House Supervisor will call on Monday morning.
  - f. The House Supervisor will collect the following paperwork and send copies to Children's by fax to 720-777-7119 and will also send paper copies with the body.
    - i. If the autopsy is physician ordered, print the order from EPIC (Family/next

of kin can request an autopsy without a physician order).

1. Complete Authority for Autopsy/Fetal Examination form (NWB10008)
  - ii. Completed and signed Pregnancy Loss Examination: 20 weeks or greater form (OBG10024)
  - iii. Patient H&P and pertinent labs
  - iv. Children's Hospital Authorization Form (see Fetal Autopsy Authorization 2022 attachment)
- g. The House Supervisor will contact Lab Logistics Courier: 877-223-9346 to arrange stat courier .
  - i. The courier service will transport to Children's Hospital and back to HRH for final disposition chosen by family.
  - ii. The House Supervisor and Security will escort the courier from the dock to the morgue to pick up the fetus and placenta.
  - iii. House Supervisor will sign out the fetus and the placenta from the morgue and log in morgue book.
  - h. Children's will reach out to the House Supervisor when the autopsy is complete. The House Supervisor should arrange a stat courier to bring the body back to HRH for final disposition per the disposition permit.
2. For gestational age less than 20 weeks Pathology will be performed at Highlands Ranch Hospital
  - a. Fetus/embryo will require a Surgical Pathology requisition
    - i. Note on the requisition if cytogenetics is to be ordered
  - b. The Pregnancy Loss Examination: Less than 20 weeks form (OBG10121) must be filled out for the following:
    - i. Stillbirth with gestational age less than 20 weeks.
    - ii. Any remains considered a surgical pathology specimen with a gestational age less than 20 weeks (non-viable fetuses, etc.)
    - iii. Dilation and Curettage (D&C), Spontaneous Abortions (SAB), missed abortion/retained POC, tubal pregnancies (ectopic tissue), and vaginally passed tissue designated as Products of Conception (POC), Therapeutic and induced abortion, Molar pregnancy.
    - iv. The form is not required for post-delivery retained products of conception
  - c. The Pregnancy Loss Examination form (OBG10121) gives the mother the option for disposition. The mother will select one of two options:
    - i. Hospital Disposition (for pregnancy less than 20 weeks). Tissue is cremated at Heflebower Funeral & Cremation Services and ashes are disposed at an approved site. Note: No ashes will be available to the family

1. Pathology will log the fetal loss material into the morgue for hospital disposition.
    2. The Pathology department sends the Hospital Disposition log to the state once a month as required.
  - ii. Mortuary Disposition (regardless of gestational age). The mother will choose one: burial, cremation, or undecided.
    1. For mortuary, the family will need to indicate the mortuary of choice.
    2. After Pathology examination, the Pathology department will log the specimen into the morgue and inform House Supervisor.
    3. The House Supervisor will coordinate transportation to the designated mortuary and/or follow up if mortuary is undecided at the time the form is filled out
  - iii. Colorado Law requires we provide options for treating the remains regardless of gestational age
  - d. Fetus/Embryo/Products of Conception and any associated placenta is to be delivered to the Lab with the surgical Pathology Requisition and Disposition paperwork
3. Unknown Gestational Age
  - a. If gestational age is unknown, a foot measurement must be performed prior to obtaining consents.
    - i. The unit care team will utilize a foot scale located in L&D.
    - ii. At 20 weeks' gestation, the foot length will be equal to or greater than 3.2 cm
    - iii. When measuring, ensure the foot is fully outstretched, heel to longest toe.
    - iv. See *Appendix A* for detailed instruction and copy of foot scale. Note: utilize the unit provided scale for accurate measurement as a printed copy may not be accurate.
    - v. Once the gestation is determined, follow the appropriate work flow for gestational age
  - b. There is no need to measure or verify gestational age if gestational age is known.

## Related Policy(ies)

[UCHealth Inpatient Declaration of Death and Post Mortem Care Policy](#)

## Definition(s)

**Embryo:** 11 weeks', 6 days or less

**Fetal Autopsy:** For the purpose of this operating process, the term fetal autopsy refers to a stillbirth,

spontaneous abortion, or fetal demise.

**Fetus:** 12 weeks' gestation until birth

**Neonate:** A newborn from birth to 4 weeks

**Stillbirth:** The death is indicated when the fetus does not breathe or show any evidence of life such as a beating heart. This does not include induced termination of pregnancy

## Reference(s)

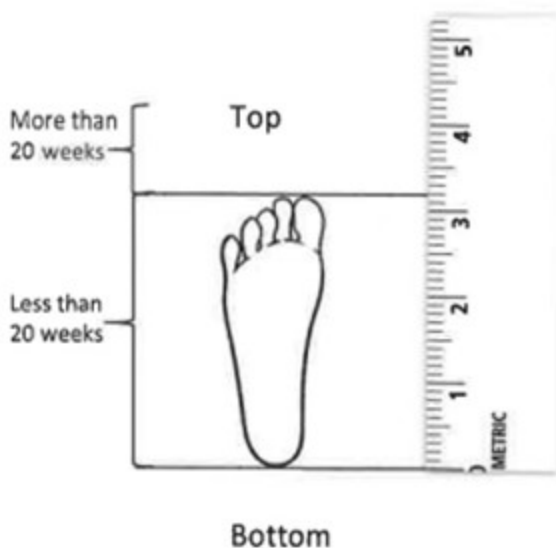
None

## Replaced

None

## Appendix A - Foot Measurement for Gestational Age

*NOTE: Image below may not be actual size – utilize the unit provided scale for accurate measurement.*



### Measurement to Determine Gestational Age

#### Instructions:

- Place the heel of the largest foot on the bottom line.
- Press the foot firmly on the card to fully extend the foot and toes (similar to how the foot would be on standing).

- If the longest toe does not reach the top line, the gestational age is less than 20 weeks.
- If the longest toe is at or above the top line, the gestational age is greater than or equal to 20 weeks.

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## Attachments

 [Fetal Autopsy Authorization 2022.pdf](#)

## Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Policy Committee Representative	Stephanie Taylor: Project Manager	06/2024
Senior Leader	Cathleen Ehrenfeucht: Chief Nursing Officer HRH	06/2024
	Elizabeth Menendez: Mgr Laboratory Services HRH	06/2024

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## Applicability

Highlands Ranch Hospital

## Standards

No standards are associated with this document