I. Purpose
To provide consistency in the procedures required when a patient of RSH dies.

II. Scope
These guidelines apply when an RSH patient dies, whether here or elsewhere.

III. Policy
In the event a patient enrolled at Richmond State Hospital expires, it is imperative the following steps be followed, when possible, to comply with medical/legal requirements and be carried out with respect and dignity.

All deaths that occur at RSH require a preliminary Coroner's investigation. Based on that preliminary investigation, the Coroner may choose to accept the case or deny it. If the death becomes a Coroner’s case, a consent from the patient’s family or legal authority is not necessary for an autopsy.

When an unexpected death occurs, or one of medical/legal/educational interest, and which the coroner has not accepted jurisdiction, Richmond State Hospital will attempt to obtain permission for an autopsy from the patient’s family member or those who have legal authorization to consent. The Medical Staff is informed when an autopsy has been requested. If an autopsy is performed, the results are shared with the Attending Physician and the Medical Staff Mortality Committee.

IV. Procedure

DEATH OF RSH WHILE PRESENT

- Code Blue procedures, including CPR will be administered to every patient who sustains cardiopulmonary arrest unless their medical record contains a Do No Resuscitate order
- Only a licensed physician shall pronounce the patient dead.
- The physician, attending /OD, will notify the family/significant others or make arrangements then communicate those with the Chaplain, and the Superintendent or designee.
- The physician will notify the Coroner at 973-9469 24 hours a day. If the Coroner is not present, leave message and the answering service or Deputy Coroner will contact the coroner.
- The RN will notify the operator and the hospital Chaplain.
- The Coroner will carry out a preliminary investigation. If the Coroner accepts jurisdiction, he/she will direct staff as to management of the body and the scene. The Coroner will complete the Death Certificate and Coroner’s Authorization for Autopsy.
- If the Coroner does not accept jurisdiction, the physician will request permission for an autopsy, if appropriate, and document the family’s response to the request in the progress notes.
- Authorization for Autopsy is available on the RSH Intranet under Online Forms.
Steps to be completed by staff:

1. **Physician**
   a. If family is present and consents to autopsy, complete Authorization for Autopsy. If family is not present, the switchboard will place a person to person call request the autopsy and witness the conversation. Complete Telephonic Authorization form #21278.
   b. In the case of organ donor, follow hospital policy.

2. **Medical Director**
   A. Completes the Indiana State Department of Heath online Death Registry
   B. Follow up with Coroner if necessary

3. **Nursing Staff**
   a. Follow nursing procedures, including notifications.
   b. Follow direction of Coroner, if Coroner accepts jurisdiction.
   c. Documents release of body and all possessions.

4. **Health Information Services Department**
   a. Notify Protection and Advocacy, followed up by a copy of the death certificate and discharge summary when they are completed.

5. **Business Office**
   a. Notification to Social Security (if required).

6. **Chaplain**
   a. Offer emotional and spiritual support to the staff and patients as appropriate.

7. **Superintendent’s Office**
   a. Notifies Division of Mental Health and Addiction per reporting guidelines in Hospital Policy 910.01.

**DEATH OF RSH PATIENT WHILE OUTSIDE RSH**

1. Health Information Services Department will:
   a. A death certificate is requested from the appropriate county health department.
   b. If patient expired in a hospital, information is requested from them. This information may include an ER report, Discharge Summary (if patient died there) and possibly an autopsy report.
   c. When the above is received by Health Information Services, it is dispersed to the following persons:
      1) **Attending Physician** Certified Death Certificate, Hospital Report to be placed in records when discharge summary is completed.
      2) **Mortality Review Committee** Death Certificate, Hospital Reports, RSH summary
      3) **Superintendent’s Office** Death Certificate and RSH summary to forward to DMHA.
      4) **Health Information Services** Death Certificate for medical record.

2. **Superintendent:**
   a. Notifies Division of Mental Health and Addiction per reporting guidelines in Hospital Policy 910.01.
   b. Verify the Coroner has been notified of the death