

Frequently Asked Questions – Death Follow Back

Below is a list of frequently asked questions regarding "Death Follow Back" of cancer cases by the Maryland Cancer Registry (MCR):



1. Question: What are these forms and why am I receiving them?

Answer: Every year the MCR asks the Vital Statistics Administration for a list of Maryland residents, who died of cancer or had cancer as another condition listed on the death certificate. The MCR staff matches that list to the MCR database both by patient identifiers (such as name and SSN) and by the type of cancer. For decedents who are not in the database or who do not have the same type of cancer in the registry versus on the death certificate, the MCR is required to follow back to get additional information. You have received the form(s) because the patient was listed on the death certificate as residing or dying in your facility, or because you signed the death certificate.



2. Question: Do I have to fill out this information?

Answer: Yes. The Health-General Article, §18-203 and 18-204, Annotated Code of Maryland and the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 10.14.01 state that you must report cancer cases not otherwise reported. For a copy of the law and regulations go to:

http://phpa.dhmf.maryland.gov/cancer/pages/mcr_regs.aspx



3. Question: This person was not at my facility; I have no record of the person. What should I do?

Answer: Please indicate, "Patient was not at this facility" and return the form. If your facility has multiple sites, please check the other sites before noting that the person was not at your facility. If the person was at the alternate site, please note the alternate site and the address before returning the form. We will follow up with the other site.



4. Question: What information is the MCR looking for?

Answer: The MCR is looking for some key pieces of information: the type of cancer, whether the cancer diagnosis was confirmed by a medical practitioner (includes Physician, Physician Assistant, Nurse Practitioner, or any documentation in medical record information of the patient having cancer), the date of diagnosis, and the State where the person lived at the time of diagnosis. In addition, the MCR would like to collect any available information on the first course of treatment.

 5. Question: Why is this information important?

Answer: The registry works very hard to collect all new cases of cancer; however, cases do get missed for many reasons. Case finding by reviewing death certificates of people who died of or who had cancer is one way of collecting these missed cases. However, death certificates provide very limited information regarding cancer. The MCR's data are judged every year by both the CDC and the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries. One criterion is the percentage of cases for the year where the only information is from the death certificate (called death certificate only (DCO) cases. If you fill out and transmit back the form, the MCR can remove the case from the DCO pool, and Maryland cancer statistics will become more accurate.

 6. What if I do not know the exact date of diagnosis?

Answer: For the purpose of filling out this form, it is acceptable to estimate the date of diagnosis. In particular, the MCR needs the exact or estimated year of diagnosis. The instructions enclosed with the forms explain how to estimate the date of diagnosis. You can also call the MCR help line (to get help with filling out the form) at -1-888-662-0016.

 7. What is an acceptable confirmation of cancer diagnosis?

Answer: While in clinical practice cancer diagnosis is generally confirmed by a pathologist, for the purpose of filling out this form you should consider the case confirmed if any recognized medical practitioner (including physicians and midlevel practitioners) documented in the medical records that the patient was diagnosed or has a history of cancer.

 8. What if the patient was diagnosed before presenting to your facility and you are not sure about the state of residence at the time of diagnosis?

Answer: This is a common and understandable situation. Please **do not** estimate the state of residence at diagnosis. Independent on whether you can confirm the cancer diagnosis or not, if the residence at diagnosis is outside of Maryland or was unknown please fill in the state abbreviation or write "residence unknown."