

COVID-19 Alert No. 10

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Expanded Guidance for Certifying Deaths Due to Post-Acute Sequelae of COVID-19

In April 2020, the National Center for Health Statistics released *Guidance for Certifying Deaths Due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)* in response to the novel coronavirus pandemic. As our knowledge of COVID-19 and its effects has progressed over time, it is now known that patients can recover from the acute phase of the infection but still suffer from long-term effects. Post-acute sequelae of COVID-19 (PASC), commonly referred to as “long COVID,” can cause a wide range of serious complications, including death (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr025.pdf>). Consequently, the original guidance document has been expanded to include guidance on how to properly certify deaths due to PASC.

Certifiers should only report conditions that they determine *caused* or *contributed* to death. If the certifier determines PASC was a cause of death, then they should report it on the death certificate using standard terminology, i.e., “Post-acute sequelae of COVID-19.” In accordance with all death certification guidance, if the certifier determines PASC did *not* cause or contribute to death, then they should *not* report it on the death certificate.

The expanded guidance is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvss/vsrg/vsrg03-508.pdf>. The new section can be found on pages 2 and 3 and the new case history and example certification can be found on page 8. In addition, links on pages 2 and 3 were updated to the current webpage for CDC’s guidance for SARS-CoV-2 testing and the updated Improving Cause-of-Death Reporting online training module, respectively. The link for reference 1 in the document was also updated to the current World Health Organization URL.

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