

Senate Engrossed

medical examiners; sudden infant death

State of Arizona
Senate
Fifty-seventh Legislature
Second Regular Session
2026

SENATE BILL 1011

AN ACT

AMENDING SECTION 11-597, ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES; RELATING TO THE COUNTY
MEDICAL EXAMINER.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona:

2 Section 1. Section 11-597, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to
3 read:

4 11-597. Autopsies; reports; exemption from liability

5 A. The county medical examiner or alternate medical examiner shall
6 conduct a death investigation to determine whether or not the public
7 interest requires an external examination, autopsy or other special
8 investigation.

9 B. An external examination or autopsy is not required for deaths
10 due to natural diseases that occur during surgical or anesthetic
11 procedures unless the medical examiner or alternate medical examiner
12 determines that an external examination or autopsy is necessary.

13 C. In the determination of the need for an autopsy, the county
14 medical examiner or alternate medical examiner may consider the request
15 for an autopsy made by private persons or public officials. If the county
16 attorney or a superior court judge of the county where the death occurred
17 requests an autopsy, the county medical examiner shall perform the
18 autopsy, or, in the case of an alternate medical examiner, an autopsy
19 shall be performed by a forensic pathologist.

20 D. A forensic pathologist shall perform an autopsy in cases of
21 sudden and unexplained infant death in accordance with protocols adopted
22 by the director of the department of health services. If the medical
23 examiner or forensic pathologist determines that the infant died of sudden
24 infant death syndrome, the medical examiner or forensic pathologist shall
25 notify the department of health services. The medical examiner or
26 forensic pathologist may retain tissue samples, specimens and other
27 biological materials for diagnostic purposes. **IN CASES OF A SUDDEN AND
28 UNEXPLAINED INFANT DEATH, THE MEDICAL EXAMINER OR FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST
29 SHALL REVIEW THE INFANT'S IMMUNIZATION AND VACCINATION HISTORY AND ANY
30 COUNTERMEASURES THAT WERE ADMINISTERED IN THE NINETY DAYS BEFORE THE
31 INFANT'S DEATH. THE MEDICAL EXAMINER OR FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST SHALL REPORT
32 ALL SUDDEN AND UNEXPLAINED INFANT DEATHS TO A NATIONAL CASE REGISTRY THAT
33 RECORDS SUDDEN UNEXPECTED INFANT DEATHS AND SUDDEN DEATH IN THE YOUNG IN
34 ACCORDANCE WITH THE UNITED STATES CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND
35 PREVENTION PROTOCOLS.**

36 E. If an autopsy is performed, a full record or report of the facts
37 developed by the autopsy in the findings of the person performing the
38 autopsy shall be properly made and filed in the office of the county
39 medical examiner or the board of supervisors. If the person performing
40 the autopsy determines that the report should be forwarded to the county
41 where the death occurred or the county in which any injury contributing to
42 or causing the death was sustained, the report shall be forwarded to the
43 county attorney.

1 F. A county attorney may request and on request shall receive from
2 the county medical examiner or alternate medical examiner a copy of the
3 report on any autopsy performed.

4 G. The county medical examiner or alternate medical examiner may
5 perform other tests deemed necessary to determine identity and the cause
6 and manner of death and may retain tissues, specimens and other biological
7 materials for subsequent examination.

8 H. When a death investigation, including an external examination,
9 autopsy or other tests are performed by the county medical examiner,
10 alternate medical examiner or a forensic pathologist, no cause of action
11 shall lie against the physician or any other person for requesting,
12 performing, participating in or determining the cause and manner of death
13 or otherwise reporting the results from the external examination, death
14 investigation, autopsy or other tests or for retaining specimens, tissues
15 or other biological materials.