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Coroner Service Victims  
Charter

## 8: Coroner Service Victims Charter

### WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM THE CORONER SERVICE

A coroner is someone who investigates the cause of a sudden, unexplained or violent death. If you are a family member or friend of someone who has died as a result of a crime, the following overview explains what you can expect from the Coroner Service.

The coroner's work involves:

- identification – identifying the body of the deceased person is upsetting for family members or friends. In certain cases, arrangements can be made for someone else to do this for you, if you find it too upsetting to do it yourself;
- post-mortems – the coroner may need to do a post-mortem examination. This is a special medical examination of the body. Coroners are aware of the concerns you may have about this and they can tell you where to get information that will help you to understand what is happening. Coroners will give you the findings of this examination, if you ask for it, for a set fee;
- release for burial – coroners will do their best to release the body of the deceased for burial without any unnecessary delay. They will tell you the likely date and time of the release of the body;
- inquests – coroners will hold an inquest as soon as possible after the death. An inquest is an enquiry into the cause of a sudden, unexplained or violent death. The Garda Síochána will usually tell you as soon as possible of the date, time and place of the inquest. At the inquest, coroners can explain to you what is involved. Coroners will try to be as sensitive as possible. For example, you may choose to leave the courtroom when the pathologist (a special doctor who reports on the examination of the body at the post-mortem) gives evidence;
- documents – following the inquest, you can ask for copies of documents, such as post-mortem reports, from the coroner's office for a set fee.

With some deaths, such as those of young people and children, coroners may let you know of local support groups and networks that you can contact. These include social workers at various hospitals and bereavement counsellors. This is not a direct function of the coroner.

## **IF WE DO NOT MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS**

If you want general information about our services, you can contact the relevant coroner's office. You can get the names, addresses and telephone numbers of coroners from your local authority or from our website [www.coroners.ie](http://www.coroners.ie).

You can also get further information by contacting the following:

Coroner Service Implementation Team

Athlumney House

IDA Business Park

Johnstown

Navan

Co Meath.

Tel: 046 909 1323

Fax: 046 905 0560

Email: [csitmail@justice.ie](mailto:csitmail@justice.ie)

## **ROLE OF THE CORONER**

Coroners inquire into the cause of sudden, unexplained, violent or unnatural deaths so that a death certificate can be issued. They may need to hold a post-mortem, sometimes followed by an inquest. This is an important public service, particularly for the family and friends of the person who has died.

An inquest is an inquiry held in public by a coroner, sometimes with a jury. The aim of the inquest is to:

- find out the facts about the death;
- place those facts on the public record; and
- make findings on the:
  - identification of the deceased;
  - date and place of death; and
  - cause of death.

While the coroner or jury may make a general recommendation aiming to prevent similar deaths, **it is not their job to decide whose fault it was or whether there was a criminal offence.**

The coroner is independent in carrying out his or her duties. A review of the coroner's decisions can only be made under the law. For example, a person can appeal to the High Court through a Judicial Review application.

Coroners understand that while their inquiry is necessary, it can often cause upset and trauma for the family of the victim. Coroners will carry out their work as sensitively as possible and with respect for the deceased person, grieving families and other people affected by the death.

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