

What is the difference between a “certified” and an “uncertified” copy of a death certificate?

A **certified** copy of a death certificate issued by the Local Vital Records Office will have a raised seal, will show the signature of the Local Registrar, and will be printed on security paper. A certified copy may be required to settle an estate or to claim insurance benefits.

State law restricts who may obtain a **certified** copy of a death certificate. A **certified** copy can only be issued to those people with a “direct and tangible interest” (categories A – D) which means the following people:

- A. An immediate family member defined as a parent (whose name is on the death certificate and whose parental rights have not been terminated), current spouse, brother, sister, grandparent, child, or current domestic partner (Declaration of Domestic Partnership registered in the Wis. Vital Records System under Chapter 770, Wis. Stats.) of the subject of the record.
 - NOTE: Grandchildren, step-parents, step-children, step-brothers and step-sisters can only obtain certified copies as categories B – D.
- B. The legal custodian or guardian of the person named on the death certificate. Legal proof, *e.g.*, a court order of custody or guardianship, is required.
- C. A person authorized in writing by one of the above. A written and notarized authorization must be attached to this application and the authorization must clearly state the relationship of the authorizing party to the subject of the record .
- D. A person who can demonstrate that the death certificate is required to determine or to protect a personal or property right. Proof is required.

If you do not meet one of the above criteria, you cannot receive a **certified** copy of a death certificate.

An **uncertified** copy will contain the same information as a certified copy but it is **not** acceptable for legal purposes, such as claiming insurance benefits.

- For pre-2003 death certificates, an **uncertified** copy of a death certificate will contain the same information as a certified copy.
- For death certificates 2003 to the present, only persons named in categories A – D on the previous page may have access to information which includes cause of death.

	PRE-2003 DEATH CERTIFICATES	2003 TO PRESENT DEATH CERTIFICATES
CERTIFIED COPY A certified copy has a raised seal, will show the signature of the State Registrar, and will be printed on security paper. It can be used for legal purposes, such as settling an estate or claiming insurance benefits.	<u>TYPE OF CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE</u> Extended Fact of Death * <u>TYPE OF RECIPIENT</u> Must have a “direct and tangible interest”	<u>TYPE OF CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE</u> Fact of Death ** Extended Fact of Death * <u>TYPE OF RECIPIENT</u> Must have a “direct and tangible interest”
UNCERTIFIED COPY (An uncertified copy is for informational purposes only; It CANNOT be used for legal purposes.)	<u>TYPE OF CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE</u> Extended Fact of Death * <u>TYPE OF RECIPIENT</u> Anyone	<u>TYPE OF CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE</u> Fact of Death ** <u>TYPE OF RECIPIENT</u> Anyone
* Extended Fact of Death Certificate. Cause of death included; can be used for insurance benefit claims. ** Fact of Death Certificate. No cause of death included; can be used for banking and most other financial transactions.		