



D4 Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Scene Investigation – National Training Academies Effect on Death Scene Investigation

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to identify various SUIDI tools and application technologies, locate “experts” within their region for information and training, and identify the role of each new investigative tool in the proper certification of sudden unexplained infant death. Attendees will also understand how to register as users of the national SUIDI registry.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by demonstrating the performance of medicolegal death scene investigators and their ability to communicate scene findings to forensic pathologists for more accurate cause and manner of death determinations in SUID cases.

SIDS rates have declined by more than 50% since the early 1990s in large part due to the national Back-to-Sleep campaign to increase the proportion of infants being placed on their backs to sleep. Despite this success, SIDS is still the third leading cause of infant mortality in the U.S. and remains an important public health priority. CDC research has found that the decline in SIDS rates since 1999 is offset (or can be explained) by increasing rates of unknown cause of death and other sudden, unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI). This finding suggests that death scene investigators, and those certifying cause-of-death on the death certificate, have changed the way they have been investigating and reporting these infant deaths in recent years.

To address this issue of change in reporting, there is a need to: (1) standardize the methods used to conduct infant death scene investigations, (2) standardized the data sets collected from infant death scene investigations, (3) create a method of reporting critical data to the forensic pathologist *prior* to autopsy, and (4) establish methods of translating death scene investigation (DSI) findings into consistent cause and manner of death certifications nationally. Standardizing and improving data collection at infant death scene investigations and national reporting of all sudden, unexplained deaths in infancy (SUDI) including SIDS is a national priority recognized by CDC and supported by the highest level of the U.S. government (Congress).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) national effort to standardize and improve the quality of infant death scene investigations through the funding for five SUIDI National Train-the-Trainer Academies will be described. Why standard data collection instrument and training materials are important for improving data collection at the scene, national reporting, and evaluation of data, and how each of these essential elements for the prevention of sudden, unexpected infant deaths will be explained. Moreover, the benefits of the new reporting form, electronic reporting system, and training materials for medical examiner/coroner investigators who conduct infant death scene investigations will be explained.

Finally, the presentation will introduce medical examiners and coroners to investigative tools that will enhance their ability to conduct a thorough infant death scene investigation. Namely, the utility of the Sudden, Unexpected Infant Death Investigation Report Form (SUIDIRF), and the new electronic national registry for reporting SUIDI data, and associated training materials will be demonstrated. The training materials will be available in several formats including web-based training, DVD, VHS, CD-ROM, and in-class training manuals.

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