

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2209

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, March 27, 2007

Title: An act relating to allowing advanced registered nurse practitioners to examine and obtain copies of autopsy reports and records.

Brief Description: Allowing advanced registered nurse practitioners to examine and obtain copies of autopsy reports.

Sponsors: House Committee on Health Care & Wellness (originally sponsored by Representatives Seaquist, Morrell, Curtis, Green, Moeller and Ormsby).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/10/07, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/26/07, 3/27/07 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Carrell, Fairley, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Marr and Parlette.

Staff: Rhoda Donkin (786-7465)

Background: Advanced registered nurse practitioners are registered nurses who have an expanded role in providing health care as recognized by the medical and nursing professions and defined by the Department of Health (DOH).

The DOH rules provide that an advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP) is a registered nurse prepared to assume primary responsibility for management of a broad range of patient care. The ARNP's function within the speciality scopes of practice and standards of care developed by national professional organizations and reviewed and approved by the State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission.

The bodies of individuals who die suddenly, under unnatural or unlawful circumstances, or from violence, among other specified causes, are under the jurisdiction of the county coroner. Autopsies may be performed as required by the coroner, as authorized by family members, guardians, or agencies authorized to dispose of the decedent's remains, or upon court order.

Records of autopsies are confidential. They may be released only to specified parties, including the decedent's family, the attending physician, and certain agencies with relevant

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official business. On request, the attending physician or the coroner must meet with the decedent's family members to discuss the autopsy findings.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Confidential records of autopsies may be released to a decedent's ARNP, as well as a decedent's attending physician. The attending ARNP, like the attending physician, is one of the parties that will meet with the family, on request, to discuss the autopsy findings.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED AMENDMENT(S) AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Health & Long-Term Care): Clarifies that autopsies may be released to ARNPs, but are not the ones to discuss the findings of the autopsy with the family of the decedent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It is important the primary practitioner of the decedent be able to have access to an autopsy when the family requests one. If the primary practitioner is an ARNP, that person should be able to receive the autopsy.

OTHER: There should be no question that medical examiners and coroners are the most qualified to discuss the results of an autopsy, regardless of who the primary care practitioner is. The bill should not allow ARNPs to be the ones to review the technical details of an autopsy with the family.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Sharon Case, Association of Advanced Practice Psychiatric Nurses.

OTHER: Debbie Wilke, Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners.