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MEMORANDUM

FROM: William T. Gormley, M.D. 
Chief Medical Examiner

TO: Health Directors, First Responders, and Funeral Services

DATE: March 26, 2020

SUBJECT: Testing for COVID-19 due to occupational exposure

The OCME does not test decedents for COVID-19 unless testing is necessary to determine the cause of death. This is necessitated by the limited number of test kits currently available. When more test kits are available, the OCME will be glad to perform the additional testing on decedents in our custody upon request and proper authorization. Under current law, permission of next of kin is required for additional testing which is not required by our investigation.

Since deaths from COVID-19 are natural deaths, the OCME usually has no jurisdiction unless the death occurs in state custody or there are other circumstances surrounding the death, which require investigation by the Medical Examiner. When we do not have custody of the decedents, we cannot test for COVID-19 because of a potential occupational exposure.

Cc: Dr. Parham Jaber, VDH Chief Deputy Commissioner
Bob Hicks, Deputy Commissioner for Community Health Services