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**Vital Records ♦ Kenneth E. Bramlett, State Registrar & Custodian**

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## MEMORANDUM

To: Georgia Funeral Directors

From: Ken Bramlett *KB*

Ref: Physician Signature on Death Certificate

Date: March 5, 2010

It has been brought to my attention that several funeral directors are having problems getting some physicians to sign death certificates. O.C.G. A. §31-10-15 states:

(c) (1) The medical certification as to the cause and circumstances of death shall be completed, signed, and returned to the funeral director or person acting as such within 72 hours after death by the physician in charge of the patient's care for the illness or condition which resulted in death, except when inquiry is required by Article 2 of Chapter 16 of Title 45, the "Georgia Death Investigation Act." In the absence of said physician or with that physician's approval the certificate may be completed and signed by an associate physician, the chief medical officer of the institution in which death occurred, or the physician who performed an autopsy upon the decedent, provided that such individual has access to the medical history of the case, views the deceased at or after death, and death is due to natural causes. **If, 30 days after a death, the physician in charge of the patient's care for the illness or condition which resulted in death has failed to complete, sign, and return the medical certification as to the cause and circumstances of death to the funeral director or person acting as such, the funeral director or person acting as such shall be authorized to report such physician to the Georgia Composite Medical Board for discipline pursuant to Code Section 43-34-38.**

The law specifically authorizes the **funeral director** to file a report with the Georgia Composite Medical Board if the physician does not provide the required information to the funeral home or person acting as such. I urge you to contact the physician that refuses to sign, advise him of the law and that you intend to file a complaint with the Georgia Composite Medical Board if he does not comply. Please notify me if you file a complaint or if I can assist you further with this issue.