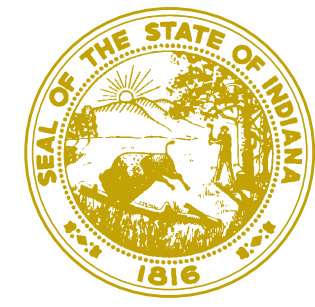




## IMPROVING CAUSE OF DEATH REPORTING QUALITY



Indiana State  
Department of Health  
Division of Vital Records

# TOP RULES FOR DETERMINING CAUSE OF DEATH

1. If you feel like you need to use a phrase like "due to," "as a result of," "secondary to," etc., then go to the next cause line.
2. Check your event order. Immediate Cause should be listed as Cause A in Part I with Underlying listed last in Part I.
3. Specify drugs and details for overdose-related deaths.
4. Utilize applicable terms for overdose-related deaths and include injury details.
5. Don't list a mechanism as the only cause in Part I, list events that led to death as a result of the mechanism.
6. Use the correct fields. Be sure you don't enter the next cause in an interval field.
7. Don't use generalized causes without more detail.
8. Specify primary sites, or state "unknown."
9. Don't abbreviate--not even common medical terminology.
10. Check spelling.
11. If there are no contributing conditions for Part II, leave the field blank.

# DRUG DEATH TERM SUGGESTIONS

### ► Recommended for Part I, Cause of Death:

- **Poisoning/ Overdose:** Use of any substance that interferes with normal bodily functions, leading to acute adverse physical or mental effects, and may result in harm or death.
- **Intoxication/Toxicity/Toxic Effects:** Harmful, noxious, or deleterious effects of a drug, or the condition of having/ experiencing such effects.

### ► Recommended for Part II, Other Significant Contributing Conditions:

- **Abuse:** Long-term, continued substance use despite knowledge of potential harm.
- **Use:** Self-administration of substances.

## RESOURCES

Vital Records Help Desk  
vrhelpdesk@isdh.in.gov  
317.233.7989