

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to medical examiners' duties; amending
3 s. 406.11, F.S.; defining terms; specifying autopsy
4 requirements for certain cases involving sudden and
5 unexpected deaths; requiring medical examiners to
6 document certain information in the autopsy reports
7 for such cases; requiring medical examiners to report
8 specified cases to the national Sudden Unexpected
9 Infant Death and Sudden Death in the Young Case
10 Registry in accordance with protocols established by
11 the Department of Health and the United States Centers
12 for Disease Control and Prevention; requiring the
13 department to impose certain administrative penalties
14 against medical examiners for failure to report such
15 cases in a specified timeframe; providing that
16 compliance with specified provisions is deemed a
17 permissible disclosure for purposes of state and
18 federal medical privacy laws; authorizing the
19 department to adopt rules; providing an effective
20 date.

21
22 WHEREAS, the United States Centers for Disease Control and
23 Prevention operates the Sudden Unexpected Infant Death and
24 Sudden Death in the Young Case Registry, a national surveillance
25 program coordinated with the National Institutes of Health to

26 establish a valuable repository of information for researchers
27 studying the characteristics of sudden deaths in young
28 individuals, and

29 WHEREAS, district medical examiners in this state are
30 currently not required to report to the registry, resulting in
31 inconsistent data collection, and

32 WHEREAS, uniform reporting and the inclusion of relevant
33 medical information, including recent immunizations and
34 emergency countermeasures, are essential to strengthen public
35 health research, identify risk factors, and improve prevention
36 strategies, NOW, THEREFORE,

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38 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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40 **Section 1. Subsection (3) is added to section 406.11,**
41 **Florida Statutes, to read:**

42 406.11 Examinations, investigations, and autopsies.—

43 (3)(a) As used in this subsection, the term:

44 1. "Sudden Arrhythmic Death Syndrome (SADS)" means the
45 sudden and unexpected death due to cardiac arrhythmia, as
46 determined by performance of an autopsy or a clinical
47 investigation, of a young, apparently healthy individual with no
48 previously diagnosed structural heart disease.

49 2. "Sudden Death in the Young (SDY)" means the sudden and
50 unexpected death of an individual younger than 20 years of age

51 due to natural causes, including, but not limited to, sudden
52 cardiac death or sudden unexpected death in epilepsy, which
53 death remains unexplained after initial investigation.

54 3. "Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)" means the sudden
55 death of an infant younger than 1 year of age which remains
56 unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including
57 performance of an autopsy, scene investigations, and a review of
58 clinical history.

59 4. "Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID)" means the
60 sudden and unexpected death of an infant younger than 1 year of
61 age, whether explained or unexplained, including, but not
62 limited to, death caused by SIDS, accidental suffocation, and
63 other potential causes.

64 5. "Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) and Sudden Death
65 in the Young (SDY) Case Registry" means the national
66 surveillance system coordinated by the Centers for Disease
67 Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health
68 which collects standardized data on sudden and unexpected deaths
69 in individuals younger than 20 years of age.

70 (b) In the case of an infant or child who dies suddenly
71 and unexpectedly, including cases of SIDS, SUID, or SDY, the
72 autopsy must include microscopic and toxicology studies and a
73 review of the child's immunization and medical records, as
74 available through the state's immunization registry established
75 pursuant to s. 381.003, from the child's pediatrician or primary

76 care practitioner, or from other sources. The medical examiner
77 shall document in the autopsy report any immunizations or
78 emergency countermeasures administered to the child within 90
79 days before the child's death and report the case to the SUID
80 and SDY Case Registry in accordance with protocols established
81 by the Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control
82 and Prevention.

83 (c) In the case of a sudden death suspected to be caused
84 by SADS in an individual of any age, the autopsy must include
85 microscopic and toxicology studies and a review of the
86 individual's immunization and medical records, as available
87 through state health databases or other sources. The medical
88 examiner shall document in the autopsy report any immunizations
89 or emergency countermeasures administered to the individual
90 within 90 days before his or her death and report the case to
91 the SUID and SDY Case Registry if the individual was younger
92 than 20 years of age at the time of death, in accordance with
93 protocols established by the Department of Health and the
94 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

95 (d) The Department of Health shall impose the following
96 administrative penalties against a district medical examiner who
97 fails to report a case of SIDS, SUID, SDY, or SADS, for
98 individuals younger than 20 years of age, to the SUID and SDY
99 Case Registry within 30 days after completing the autopsy
100 report:

101 1. For the first unreported case, a fine of up to \$1,000.

102 2. For the second unreported case, a fine of up to \$5,000.

103 3. For repeated noncompliance, referral to the Medical
104 Examiners Commission for disciplinary action, which may include
105 suspension or removal pursuant to s. 406.075.

106 (e) Compliance with the reporting and documentation
107 requirements of this section is deemed a permissible disclosure
108 under state and federal medical privacy laws, including the
109 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.

110 (f) The Department of Health may adopt rules to implement
111 this subsection.

112 **Section 2.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.