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AUTOPSY SIDS DEATHS

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House Bills 4639 and 4640
 Sponsor: Rep. Michael J. Bennet
 Committee: Public Health

Complete to 4-17-89

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILLS 4639 AND 4640 AS INTRODUCED 4-13-89

The bills would amend the county medical examiners act to require an investigation and autopsy if a child under two years of age is suspected of having died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

House Bill 4639 (MCL 52.202). Under current law, county medical examiners are required to investigate the cause and manner of death under certain circumstances: when someone has died by violence, whose death was unexpected, who died as the result of abortion, or who died without medical attention during the 48 hours prior to death. House Bill 4639 would add to this list of deaths requiring investigation by a county medical examiner the sudden death, from unknown causes, of a child under two years of age.

When a child under two years of age died suddenly from unknown causes, the county medical examiner would be required:

- (1) to notify the local law enforcement agency or the state police;
- (2) to investigate the dead child's residence if he or she died away from home; the health histories of the child and of his or her mother; and any other relevant prenatal history; and
- (3) to send a written report of the investigation to the Department of Public Health (DPH).

The DPH would promulgate rules establishing the specialized training for the medical examiner, and either the local health department or the county medical examiner's office could conduct the training.

House Bill 4640 (MCL 52.205a). Under current law, if a child under two years of age dies suddenly of unknown causes, the parents or legal guardians can request the county medical examiner to arrange for an autopsy and the costs of the autopsy are paid by the Department of Public Health (DPH) from funds appropriated for that purpose by the legislature.

House Bill 4640 would require that an autopsy be performed in cases where SIDS is the suspected cause of death and would prohibit the diagnosis of SIDS until an autopsy had been done. The costs of the mandatory autopsy would be paid by the Department of Public Health from funds appropriated by the legislature, after the director received the results of the autopsy and a copy of the report of the investigation required by House Bill 4639.

House Bills 4639 & 4640 (4-17-89)