



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

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MANDATORY SIDS AUTOPSIES

House Bills 4555 and 4556
Sponsor: Rep. Michael J. Bennane
Committee: Public Health

Complete to 9-4-91

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILLS 4555 AND 4556 AS INTRODUCED 3-13-91

The county medical examiners act (Public Act 181 of 1953) requires certain deaths to be investigated by county medical examiners: if the death was violent, unexpected, or medically unattended (for the 48 hours immediately preceding the death and the attending physician, if any, is not able to determine the cause of death); if the death occurred as the result of an abortion, whether self-induced or otherwise; or if the death was that of a prisoner in a city or county jail. The bills would amend the act to require, in addition, an investigation and autopsy if a child under two years old were suspected of having died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

House Bill 4555 (MCL 52.202) would require county medical examiners (or county deputy medical examiners or registered nurses who worked for the local health department) who had specialized training in SIDS to investigate the cause and manner of death when a child under two years old died suddenly from unknown causes. The investigating county medical examiner (or nurse) would be required to:

- * investigate the health histories of the child and its mother and any other relevant prenatal history;
- * investigate the place of death (if the death occurred outside of a medical facility);
- * notify the local law enforcement agency or the state police; and
- * send a written report of the investigation to the Department of Public Health.

A local health department, the county medical examiner's office, or the state health department could conduct the training on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome required of the investigators.

House Bill 4556 (MCL 52.205a) would require an autopsy to be done when a child under two died of what appeared to be Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Currently, under the county medical examiners act, if a child less than two years old dies suddenly and from unknown causes (or is found dead from unknown causes), the death must be reported to the county medical examiner. The county medical examiner then must tell the dead child's parents or guardian that they may request that a state-paid autopsy be performed.

The bill would amend the act to require state-paid autopsies be done on all children younger than two who died under circumstances suggesting SIDS (or who were found dead from unknown causes). The county medical examiner would perform (or order) the autopsy and report the results to the dead child's parents or guardian ("immediately") and to the

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Department of Public Health. The department would pay the costs of the autopsy upon receiving the results of the autopsy and a copy of the report of the investigation required under House Bill 4555.

A county medical examiner could not attribute death to SIDS unless an autopsy were performed.