



Guidance Document: Coroner Use of the Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System

Updated 8-31-2015

The State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy recognizes that information obtained from the Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System (OARRS), may assist coroners in conducting death investigations.

Coroners are authorized to obtain information from OARRS pursuant to section 4729.80 of the Ohio Revised Code. This section authorizes a prescriber or the prescriber's delegate to access the Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System for information from the database relating to a patient who is either a current patient of the prescriber or a potential patient of the prescriber based on a referral of the patient to the prescriber.

Can a Coroner run an OARRS report on prior drug overdose decedent? (Updated)

While many coroners run a patient's OARRS report during their initial investigation, the Board has been contacted by several Coroners seeking OARRS information to supplement their initial findings on a previously completed death investigation.

The Board adopted the following resolution on August 31, 2015 that permits a coroner to obtain an OARRS report on a previously completed investigation:

In order to address questions regarding OARRS access by coroners in the investigation of drug overdose deaths, the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy hereby recognizes that a coroner remains the treating prescriber for a decedent beyond the initial investigation period for the purpose of accessing OARRS to conduct a thorough and complete review of the circumstances surrounding a patient's death.

It should be noted that a coroner **is not** permitted to run a report on anyone who may be associated with the investigation (family member, friend, etc.).

Can Coroners Use Delegates to Run Reports?

Yes. Coroners may use unlicensed delegates to run reports during an active death investigation. For the purposes of OARRS, any individual who is either supervised or employed by the coroner can serve as their delegate. In addition, the Board has determined that a coroner may have as many delegates as they believe they can adequately supervise. It is up to the coroner to decide how many delegates they designate.



A delegate may only run a patient's prescription history report and is not permitted to interpret the results. Delegates must have their own OARRS account with their own unique user name and password. They may not run the report under the coroner's user name and password.

Can an OARRS Report be Included as Part of a Coroner's Report?

No. The report itself and the information contained within the report is not a public record and cannot be included as part of the coroner's report. The report and the information contained within the report is also not considered part of the "full and complete records of the coroner"¹ and should not be released under any circumstances, as dissemination of such information is prohibited under section 4729.86 of the Ohio Revised Code.

While OARRS data is a tool to guide or direct a coroner during an investigation, the OARRS report itself is NOT evidence. Each OARRS report includes the disclaimer statement: "The State of Ohio does not warrant the above information to be complete or accurate." This statement is necessary because data entry errors by pharmacists and prescribers may occur.

OARRS data should be used as a tool to support an investigation. It can be used when talking with a health care provider as well as to guide you to the original prescriptions and dispensing records which may be obtained in accordance with section 313.091 of the Ohio Revised Code.

What do I do if I Discover any Questionable Prescribing Activity on a Decedent's OARRS Report?

The State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy is charged with preventing, detecting and investigating the diversion of dangerous drugs, including controlled substances. The Board investigates and presents evidence of violations of federal or state drug laws by any person and refers them for prosecution and/or for administrative action. If a coroner suspects any violation of state or federal drug laws, they should file a complaint with the Board by visiting:

www.pharmacy.ohio.gov/complaint

¹ <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/313.10>