



## What Is Racial Misclassification On Death Certificates, And How Does It Affect American Indian And Alaska Native People?

People are often asked about their race and ethnicity on businesses or government forms, especially when completing legal documents. This helps experts identify who is using services, track business and public health trends, and identify where resources are needed. However, many people self-identify as American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN) but end up recorded as another race in official government documents. Public health experts call this phenomenon: “Racial Misclassification”. When this happens on death certificates, the lack of complete and accurate data harms AI/AN people. It becomes hard to track demographic trends of who is dying from preventable deaths, where, and what resources are needed to address these problems. Death certificate racial data is recorded by funeral directors, coroners, or medical examiners - sometimes based merely on appearance or assumptions. When collecting racial data, funeral directors may be hesitant to ask the family questions about the decedent's race, or not be trained on how to ask or why it is important to do so. This leads to large errors in death record data, which harms the community.



### What Can Funeral Director Associations Do To Prevent Racial Misclassification Of American Indian And Alaska Native People On Death Certificates?

- ➔ **Provide and promote training that** covers how to effectively collect race, Hispanic origin, and tribal affiliation data during death registration.
- ➔ **Provide Continuing Education Credit (CEC) for** training on demographic data collection. Whenever possible, training should:
  - **Include cultural competency**
  - **Center the experiences of AI/AN funeral directors and community members**
  - **Incorporate the experiences of older, more experienced funeral directors** who have learned to manage discomfort on this topic
  - **Follow peer-to-peer and mentorship models**, whenever possible to reduce anxiousness or hesitancy
- ➔ **Ensure that any forms or worksheets you provide for funeral directors to use match the Standard Death Certificate and are culturally competent**, as described in the section on “recommendations for funeral directors”.