

PUBLIC HEALTH CODE (EXCERPT)
Act 368 of 1978

333.2855a Public display of autopsy photograph; court action; applicability of section to internet service provider; constitutionally protected speech or activity not prohibited; definitions.

Sec. 2855a.

(1) A person shall not publicly display an autopsy photograph of a decedent that identifies the decedent by name, face, or other identifying physical feature unless 1 of the following conditions is met:

(a) One of the following individuals specifically provides written authorization for the public display of the autopsy photograph:

(i) A person nominated by will or other writing signed by the decedent.

(ii) If an individual described in subparagraph (i) cannot be identified or located following a diligent and good faith effort, the decedent's spouse.

(iii) If an individual described in subparagraph (i) or (ii) cannot be identified or located following a diligent and good faith effort, an adult child of the decedent.

(iv) If an individual described in subparagraph (i), (ii), or (iii) cannot be identified or located following a diligent and good faith effort, a parent of the decedent.

(v) If an individual described in subparagraph (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv) cannot be identified or located following a diligent and good faith effort, the next of kin of the decedent.

(vi) If an individual described in subparagraph (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), or (v) cannot be identified or located following a diligent and good faith effort, an individual charged by law with the responsibility for burial or cremation of the decedent's body.

(b) The public display of the autopsy photograph is 1 of the following:

(i) Upon written authorization by the prosecuting attorney having jurisdiction for a purpose directly related to the investigation or prosecution of a criminal case.

(ii) Authorized by a court of competent jurisdiction for a purpose directly related to the proceedings in a civil case.

(iii) Required for a health department to carry out its lawful duties.

(iv) Necessary for legitimate research or teaching of only medical, public health, or public safety personnel or students enrolled at a postsecondary educational institution.

(2) A decedent's parent, surviving spouse, and children who are injured as a result of a violation of this section may bring an action in a court of competent jurisdiction to recover \$1,000.00 or actual damages, whichever is greater, plus costs and reasonable attorney fees.

(3) This section does not apply to an internet service provider or computer network service provider who in good faith, and without knowledge of the content of the photograph, provides the medium for public display of the photograph. As used in this subsection, "internet service provider" means a person who provides a service that enables users to access content, information, electronic mail, or other services offered over the internet.

(4) This section does not prohibit constitutionally protected speech or activity.

(5) As used in this section:

(a) "Autopsy photograph" means an image of a decedent obtained during an autopsy of that decedent in this state, and includes an image on videotape, motion picture or other film, or an image captured by digital means.

(b) "Decedent" means a deceased human being.

(c) "Public display" means to knowingly communicate, exhibit, or display in open view or to distribute to members of the public or in a public manner, whether or not for commercial purposes, through any medium of communication including, but not limited to, the internet or a computer, computer network, computer program, or computer system, as those terms are defined in section 2 of 1979 PA 53, MCL 752.792.

History: Add. 2003, Act 322, Eff. Mar. 31, 2004