

## TESTIMONY BY EDGAR BAKER PHILLIPS ON HIS SISTER DORIS PHILLIPS

Good morning chairman Fonseca, viewing and listening audience and all those present

My name is Edgar Baker Phillips Executive Director Of the St. Thomas Stroke support Group, Inc. a 5013c organization.

I would like to thank you for inviting me here today to talk about my sister Doris and my experience with the Roy Lester Schneider Hospital. First let me give a quick report on my sister Doris. She is a 70 year old Virgin Islander who was recently diagnosed with Schizophrenia. She resided off island for approximately 20 years and the family was not aware of her location. She returned to St. Thomas in 2020 and refused medical care. She erected a tent on the family's property and decided to live there.

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, I received a call from my sister's neighbor who informed me that they had not seen my sister for many days and her yard was unkempt which they had never seen before. The neighbors felt that something was wrong. On January 26<sup>th</sup> I went to the hospital to find out if she was admitted there. Informed by hospital personnel at the front desk that my sister was not hospitalized at the hospital. Since I was unable to locate my sister, I decided to file a missing person report with the department of Public Safety. A silver alert was sent out by Public Safety, while she was in the morgue.

On January 27<sup>th</sup> , I received a call from another neighbor of my sister, who informed me that my sister was taken by ambulance to the hospital approximately two weeks prior to Jan. 27th, I contacted EMS to confirm this information and it was verified that my sister Doris was transported to the Emergency Room at Schneider Regional Medical center. I was advised to contact the Nursing Supervisor at the Hospital for additional information. Contacted the supervisor, who informed me that the Emergency Room Physician will contact me. The Physician did call and reported that my sister was brought to the Emergency Room on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January and died that same day from a bleed. According to the physician, they were unable to contact the individual who was listed as next of kin. The individual who they reported that they contacted said she never received a call from the Hospital.

This was not the first time that my sister was hospitalized at Schneider Regional Hospital and they could have looked back to determine who was her next of kin then or they could have filed a report with Public Safety. Additionally, when I picked my sister's belongings up , her bag had numerous pieces of identification.

I also encountered a problem obtaining my sister's death certificate to enable the family to plan her funeral . The process is quite lengthy . She was in the morgue for two weeks , but the document was not signed by the Physician. It was signed the following day, sent to the funeral home, then the funeral home had to send it to vital Statistics who needed five to seven days to record the information and return it back to the funeral home. The funeral home then forward it to the family for review , it is return to the funeral Home, who will have to return the document if there is an error in the document.

I found out that my sister had a bank account with funds for her funeral, but there was no beneficiary listed, but Title 15 Section 89 Payment for Debt and Funeral Without Administration provides a guide on how this is handled. The Bank determines how much will be provided, even if the invoices are provided and there is sufficient monies available in the bank. According to Bank personnel, a repast is not considered a part of a funeral neither is an organist.

Thank God the family was able to pull together and bury my sister.

My concerns were as follows

1. No notification of next of kin or family member of death of a loved one. She was taken to the Emergency Room by ambulance, therefore they were aware of where she was living.
2. The process of obtaining a death certificate is too cumbersome.
3. Why is the Bank determining what is considered a part of a funeral, even thou the funds are available.

I would like to thank this body for allowing me to share my experience as it relates to my siste's death. I am available for any questions