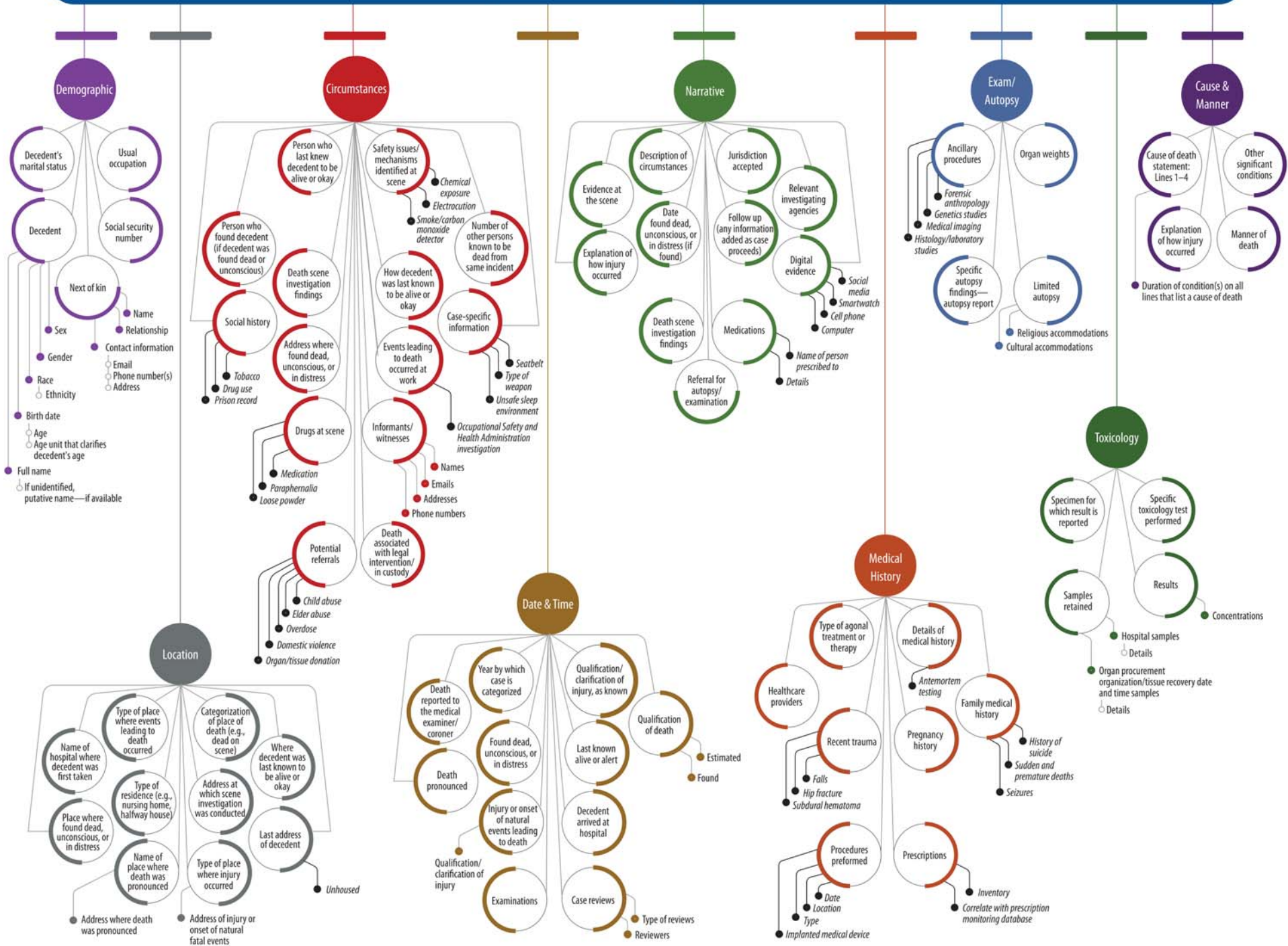## Appendix A. Medicolegal Death Investigation Frequently Used Data Elements

This appendix provides a graphic on frequently used data elements in medicolegal death investigation (adapted from Parish and Hanzlick[15]).

This graphic shows the final list of data elements that should be collected for every case. This graphic also links these frequently used elements to overarching categories of death investigation and indicates how these elements are integrated into the death investigation process. Italicized items are examples of information that could be provided during an investigation, and standard information is represented in normal text. This graphic can be downloaded and used in agency training to ensure all data are collected. Additionally, the graphic can be used to develop checklists for death investigators, develop programming requirements for data developers to code MDI information, or assist with standardization and consistency among data exchange as part of other resources.

Medicolegal Death Investigation Data Elements

Demographic

- Decedent's marital status
- Usual occupation
- Decedent
- Social security number
- Next of kin
  - Name
  - Relationship
  - Contact information
    - Email
    - Phone number(s)
    - Address
- Sex
- Gender
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Birth date
  - Age
  - Age unit that clarifies decedent's age
- Full name
  - If unidentified, putative name—if available

Circumstances

- Person who last knew decedent to be alive or okay
- Safety issues/mechanisms identified at scene
  - Chemical exposure
  - Electrocution
  - Smoke/carbon monoxide detector
- Person who found decedent (if decedent was found dead or unconscious)
- Death scene investigation findings
- How decedent was last known to be alive or okay
- Number of other persons known to be dead from same incident
- Social history
  - Tobacco
  - Drug use
  - Prison record
- Address where found dead, unconscious, or in distress
- Events leading to death occurred at work
- Case-specific information
  - Seatbelt
  - Type of weapon
  - Unsafe sleep environment
  - Occupational Safety and Health Administration investigation
- Drugs at scene
  - Medication
  - Paraphernalia
  - Loose powder
- Informants/witnesses
  - Names
  - Emails
  - Addresses
  - Phone numbers
- Potential referrals
  - Child abuse
  - Elder abuse
  - Overdose
  - Domestic violence
  - Organ/tissue donation
- Death associated with legal intervention/in custody

Location

- Type of place where events leading to death occurred
- Categorization of place of death (e.g., dead on scene)
- Name of hospital where decedent was first taken
- Where decedent was last known to be alive or okay
- Type of residence (e.g., nursing home, halfway house)
- Address at which scene investigation was conducted
- Place where found dead, unconscious, or in distress
- Name of place where death was pronounced
- Type of place where injury occurred
- Last address of decedent
  - Unhoused
- Address where death was pronounced
- Address of injury or onset of natural fatal events

Narrative

- Description of circumstances
- Jurisdiction accepted
- Evidence at the scene
- Date found dead, unconscious, or in distress (if found)
- Relevant investigating agencies
- Explanation of how injury occurred
- Follow up (any information added as case proceeds)
- Digital evidence
  - Social media
  - Smartwatch
  - Cell phone
  - Computer
- Death scene investigation findings
- Medications
  - Name of person prescribed to
  - Details
- Referral for autopsy/examination

Date & Time

- Year by which case is categorized
- Qualification/clarification of injury, as known
- Death reported to the medical examiner/coroner
- Found dead, unconscious, or in distress
- Last known alive or alert
- Qualification of death
  - Estimated
  - Found
- Death pronounced
- Injury or onset of natural events leading to death
- Decedent arrived at hospital
- Qualification/clarification of injury
- Examinations
- Case reviews
  - Type of reviews
  - Reviewers

Exam/Autopsy

- Ancillary procedures
  - Forensic anthropology
  - Genetics studies
  - Medical imaging
  - Histology/laboratory studies
- Organ weights
- Specific autopsy findings—autopsy report
- Limited autopsy
  - Religious accommodations
  - Cultural accommodations

Medical History

- Type of agonal treatment or therapy
- Details of medical history
- Healthcare providers
- Antemortem testing
- Recent trauma
  - Falls
  - Hip fracture
  - Subdural hematoma
- Pregnancy history
- Family medical history
  - History of suicide
  - Sudden and premature deaths
  - Seizures
- Procedures preformed
  - Date
  - Location
  - Type
  - Implanted medical device
- Prescriptions
  - Inventory
  - Correlate with prescription monitoring database

Toxicology

- Specimen for which result is reported
- Specific toxicology test performed
- Samples retained
- Results
  - Concentrations
  - Hospital samples
    - Details
  - Organ procurement organization/tissue recovery date and time samples
    - Details

Cause & Manner

- Cause of death statement: Lines 1—4
- Other significant conditions
- Explanation of how injury occurred
- Manner of death
- Duration of condition(s) on all lines that list a cause of death

Note: Items represented as small, closed, and colored circles are data elements that should be recorded in every case. Items represented in italics after black dots are examples of data and are not an exhaustive list.