§ 556. Functions, powers and duties of the board. The justice center medical review board shall have the following functions, powers and duties:

(a) make a preliminary determination whether the death of a patient or resident in a residential facility within the meaning of subdivision four of section four hundred eighty-eight of the social services law that is operated, licensed or certified by an office of the department of mental hygiene or the office of children and family services, which has been brought to its attention is unusual or whether such death reasonably appears to have resulted from other than natural causes and warrants investigation;

(b) investigate the causes of and circumstances surrounding such unusual death or deaths from other than natural causes of patients or residents in such facilities;

(c) visit and inspect any facility in which such a death has occurred;

(d) cause the body of the deceased to undergo such examinations including an autopsy as in the opinion of the board are necessary to determine the cause of death, irrespective of whether such examination or autopsy shall have been previously performed;

(e) upon review of the cause of and circumstances surrounding the death of any patient or resident, submit its report thereon to the executive director and, where appropriate, make recommendations to prevent the recurrence of same to the appropriate commissioner of the department of mental hygiene or the commissioner of children and family services and to the director of the facility; and

(f) advise the executive director on medical issues relevant to the functions, powers, and duties of the justice center including allegations of abuse or neglect of a patient or resident referred to it.