

Department: Health Department **Program Contact:** Jennifer Vines
Program Offer Type: Innovative/New Program **Program Offer Stage:** As Adopted

Related Programs:

Program Characteristics:

Executive Summary

The County Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) investigates and determines the cause and manner of deaths which occur under specific circumstances in Multnomah County. Approximately 3,200 of the County's 6,500 yearly deaths fall into this category. MEO activities are highly visible to the public when a questionable death occurs in the community. MEO staff are directly involved with the families, loved ones of deceased individuals, and the emergency response community, (police, fire, mortuary services, accident investigators) on a daily basis. The MEO operates 24/7/365.

Program Summary

The medical examiner caseload is increasing year over year with fewer scene responses over time, as staffing fails to keep pace with the number of deaths needing investigation. Death investigation data are key to understanding and acting on causes of death through analyses like Domicile Unknown, the June 2021 extreme heat event report, and now traffic deaths. When there is no scene response, there is significantly less capacity to produce important public health data and overall fewer services for families wanting answers about how their loved one died.

Performance Measures

Measure Type	Primary Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Budgeted	FY22 Estimate	FY23 Offer
Output	Increase In-Person Investigations	1,009	1,200	1,200	1,350
Outcome	increase in-person in home investigation to 2019 levels	62	61	61	68

Performance Measures Descriptions

Legal / Contractual Obligation

ORS 146 specifies responsibilities and authorities for the Office (i.e. deaths requiring investigation; responsibility for investigation; notification of death; removal of body; authority to enter and secure premises; notification of next of kin; authority to order removal of body fluids; autopsies; disposition of personal property; unidentified human remains). ORS 146 also establishes a hybrid state/county program structure which limits the county's authority over operations, procedures, and technical functions.

Revenue/Expense Detail

	Adopted General Fund	Adopted Other Funds	Adopted General Fund	Adopted Other Funds
Program Expenses	2022	2022	2023	2023
Personnel	\$0	\$0	\$133,301	\$0
Total GF/non-GF	\$0	\$0	\$133,301	\$0
Program Total:	\$0		\$133,301	
Program FTE	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00

Program Revenues				
Total Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Explanation of Revenues

Significant Program Changes

Last Year this program was:

From FY18-FY22, the ME program has had a 76% increase in cases requiring an in-person investigation and a 40% increase in total cases investigated, with a 30% increase in caseload over the last two years alone. In 2020, cases requiring an in-person investigation experienced a 36% increase and in 2021, an additional 17%, for an overall increase of 53% in the last two years. Historically, low staffing levels limit the number of cases where an investigator is able to respond in-person to the scene, resulting in investigations being conducted via telephone. In 2021, we did not respond to 1,933 cases, up from 1,631 last year. With a steady increase in Medical Examiner caseload, population and cases requiring ME investigations (homicides, overdoses, accidents), this added position will 1)bring the office to acceptable staffing levels and 2)provide immediate support to alleviate the high caseload per investigator.