

**Department:** Health Department **Program Contact:** Jennifer Vines  
**Program Offer Type:** Existing Operating Program **Program Offer Stage:** As Adopted  
**Related Programs:**  
**Program Characteristics:**

### Executive Summary

The County Medical Examiner's Office (ME) investigates and determines the cause and manner of deaths which occur under specific circumstances in Multnomah County. Approximately 2,500 of the County's 6,500 yearly deaths fall into this category. ME Office activities are highly visible to the public when a questionable death occurs in the community. ME 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 Office operates 24/7/365.

### Program Summary

Under ORS Chapter 146, the County is required to have a Medical Examiner (ME) Office investigate deaths that occur under specific circumstances. These include deaths a) that are apparently homicidal, suicidal or occurring under suspicious circumstances, b) resulting from unlawful use of controlled substances or toxic agents, c) following an accident or injury, d) occurring under incarceration or police custody, and e) during or arising from employment. They also include deaths that are sudden, unexpected or that are unattended by a physician.

As most deaths investigated by the ME are sudden and unexpected, the ME's Office is in a unique position to identify unusual and emerging causes of death and injury, and to contribute to preventive public health interventions. Examples include clusters of death due to an unknown illness, prescription medication, overdose, or illicit drug use.

ORS 146 establishes a hybrid state/county approach to ME services. Counties and the state share authority and responsibility for staffing, supervision, operations, and technical direction. Multnomah County staff carry out field death investigations, authorize removal of deceased persons from the place of death, notify next-of-kin, and protect decedents' property until a personal representative takes charge. They also work in collaboration with state physician Medical Examiners who perform autopsies and certify the cause and manner of death. The Multnomah County ME's Office is now physically located in Multnomah County.

### Performance Measures

Measure Type	Primary Measure	FY19 Actual	FY20 Budgeted	FY20 Estimate	FY21 Offer
Output	Number of deaths requiring investigation	2,384	2,500	2,425	2,500
Outcome	Deputy Medical Examiner arrives on-scene within one hour for 90% of calls	72%	80%	64%	80%

### Performance Measures Descriptions

Output: Number of deaths in Multnomah County that require investigations. Because census data and occurrence deaths are tracked at the calendar year level, these data are based on calendar years.

Outcome: A Deputy Medical Examiner arrives on-scene in 90% of calls requiring on-scene investigation within one hour of first notification in order to support public safety, law enforcement, and affected members of the public.

## 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	2020	2020	2021	2021
Personnel	\$1,365,433	\$0	\$1,464,418	\$15,993
Contractual Services	\$16,727	\$0	\$62,555	\$0
Materials & Supplies	\$87,894	\$0	\$60,487	\$7
Internal Services	\$134,113	\$0	\$266,827	\$1,872
<b>Total GF/non-GF</b>	<b>\$1,604,167</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$1,854,287</b>	<b>\$17,872</b>
<b>Program Total:</b>	<b>\$1,604,167</b>		<b>\$1,872,159</b>	
<b>Program FTE</b>	11.00	0.00	11.00	0.00

Program Revenues				
Intergovernmental	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$17,872
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$17,872</b>

## Explanation of Revenues

This program generates \$1,872 in indirect revenues.  
\$ 17,872 - Medical Records fund

## Significant Program Changes

**Last Year this program was:** FY 2020: 40052-20 Medical Examiner

The Multnomah County Medical Examiner's Office (MCMEO) currently employs a staff of seven full-time Deputy Medical Examiners (aka Death Investigators) and one Chief Deputy Medical Examiner to cover an ORS-required 24/7/365 operation. The Medical Examiner's Office was previously co-located with the Clackamas County and Oregon ME Offices in an Oregon State Police facility in Clackamas County. In December of 2019, the ME Office moved into the Gladys McCoy Multnomah County Building. The move into Multnomah County will increase the number of scene calls in which a Deputy Medical Examiner responds, as we are beginning our response from within Multnomah County, providing increased service to the public. The amount of time spent in traffic will also significantly decrease as we are now responding from within our county. The move generated an increase in facilities costs, which is reflected in our FY21 budget.