

**Department:** Health Department

**Program Contact:** Richard Bruno

**Program Offer Type:** Operating

**Program Offer Stage:** 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 3,500 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 and they provide key components of foundational public health data. Operating 24/7/365 MEO staff interface directly with loved ones of the deceased and emergency responders (police, fire, mortuary services, accident investigators) on a daily basis.

**Program Description**

The Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) is involved in all deaths, with the exception of natural deaths occurring directly under physician care greater than 24 hours in a hospital or hospice setting. 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.

Medical Examiner staff work directly with community/family members to investigate deaths that fall under our jurisdiction to provide support and crucial information regarding the cause and manner of death. The Medical Examiner's Office strives to provide in-person investigations, to minimize the number of scenes in which law enforcement is the sole agency present. This provides increased public service, often to those most underserved.

The MEO works diligently with the community and external partners to provide equitable services to the LGBTQ community and those facing mental health crisis and addiction. Investigations conducted by our office provide critical information to inform and shape programs for those experiencing homelessness, addiction and mental health crisis.

**Performance Measures**

| Measure Type | Performance Measure   | FY23 Actual | FY24 Budgeted | FY24 Estimate | FY25 Target |
|--------------|---|-------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Output       | Number of deaths requiring investigation  | 3,500       | 3,700         | 3,750         | 4,000       |
| Outcome      | Deputy Medical Examiner arrives on-scene within one hour for 90% of calls           | 71%         | 85%           | 75%           | 85%         |
| Outcome      | Increase the number of in-person scene responses with a death investigator on scene | 1,471       | 1,400         | 1,650         | 1,800       |

**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<br>General Fund | Adopted<br>Other Funds | Adopted<br>General Fund | Adopted<br>Other Funds |
|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Program Expenses       | 2024                    | 2024                   | 2025                    | 2025                   |
| Personnel              | \$2,190,588             | \$0                    | \$2,541,019             | \$0                    |
| Contractual Services   | \$114,298               | \$0                    | \$118,526               | \$0                    |
| Materials & Supplies   | \$24,947                | \$0                    | \$23,169                | \$0                    |
| Internal Services      | \$345,943               | \$0                    | \$355,815               | \$0                    |
| <b>Total GF/non-GF</b> | <b>\$2,675,776</b>      | <b>\$0</b>             | <b>\$3,038,529</b>      | <b>\$0</b>             |
| <b>Program Total:</b>  | <b>\$2,675,776</b>      |                        | <b>\$3,038,529</b>      |                        |
| <b>Program FTE</b>     | 15.00                   | 0.00                   | 17.00                   | 0.00                   |

| Program Revenues     |            |            |            |            |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Total Revenue</b> | <b>\$0</b> | <b>\$0</b> | <b>\$0</b> | <b>\$0</b> |

## Explanation of Revenues

## Significant Program Changes

**Last Year this program was:** FY 2024: 40052 Medical Examiner

An addition of 2.00 FTE MDI positions will be added in FY 2025 to account for increased workload and state changes in FY 2024. In 2023, the ME program experienced a 13% increase with in person investigation and an 8% increase in total cases. In 2023, the state made changes to its ME program that significantly increased the responsibility of the county to manage the operations of death investigation and certification deaths, including the addition of performing external examinations. Under ORS 146, medicolegal death investigators are tasked with making positive identifications of deceased, locating and notifying the next of kin and directing indigent dispositions. Increased caseload has increased the need for resources to perform positive identifications through fingerprints, locating and researching next of kin, next of kin notifications and indigent dispositions for those who are unclaimed.