



Program #40052 - Medical Examiner **FY 2026 Department Requested**

Department: Health Department **Program Contact:** Richard Bruno
Program Offer Type: Operating **Program Offer Stage:** Department Requested
Related Programs:
Program Characteristics:

Program Description

The County is required to perform death investigations and those services are housed within the Health Department. The State Medical Examiner’s Office (SMEO) is the lead agency for death investigations in Oregon operating within the Oregon State Police. The County 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 Medical Examiner (ME) are sudden and unexpected, the MEO is in a unique position to identify unusual and emerging causes of death and injury, and to contribute to preventive public health interventions. While the SMEO is part of the Oregon State Police in a legally focused investigative position, the County MEO is housed within the Health Department. This remains a close connection between public health, public safety and fatalities and identification of the leading causes of death and prevention efforts.

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 MEO 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 all the impacted communities, frequently these are underserved underrepresented people that do not have direct connections to formal healthcare and those facing mental health crisis and addiction. Those individuals that die while under medical care are not typically investigated by the MEO. Investigations conducted by this office provide critical data trends that shape the Department’s work in addressing health inequities in preventable causes of death. This provides information to inform and shape programs for those experiencing chronic medical illnesses, homelessness, addiction, mental health crisis, weather impacted heat and cold, gun violence, traffic fatalities, among some of the more notably preventable causes of death.

Performance Measures

Measure Type	Performance Measure	FY24 Actual	FY25 Budgeted	FY25 Estimate	FY26 Target
Output	External examinations performed by county	450	400	400	500
Outcome	Deputy Medical Examiner arrives on-scene within one hour for 90% of calls	66	85	85	80
Outcome	The number of in-person scene responses with a death investigator on scene	1,370	1,650	1,800	1,650

Performance Measures Descriptions

1. Number of on-scene medicolegal death examinations performed by Multnomah County. 2. Percentage of calls in which the Deputy Medical Examiner arrives on-scene within one hour. 3. Number of investigations in which the death investigator is on-scene.

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	Department Requested General Fund	Department Requested Other Funds
Program Expenses	2025	2025	2026	2026
Personnel	\$2,541,019	\$0	\$2,822,686	\$0
Contractual Services	\$118,526	\$0	\$94,627	\$0
Materials & Supplies	\$23,169	\$0	\$26,568	\$0
Internal Services	\$355,815	\$0	\$349,502	\$0
Total GF/non-GF	\$3,038,529	\$0	\$3,293,383	\$0
Program Total:	\$3,038,529		\$3,293,383	
Program FTE	17.00	0.00	17.00	0.00

Program Revenues				
Fees, Permits & Charges	\$0	\$0	\$282,530	\$0
Total Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$282,530	\$0

Explanation of Revenues

\$ 282,530 - Ambulance Franchise Fees

Significant Program Changes

Last Year this program was: FY 2025: 40052 Medical Examiner

Significant changes are related to fully realized increased work load, and decreased work capacity. The Medical Examiners Office (MEO) has continued to have an increased volume of required scene death investigations. In FY25 there was an increased budget for 2 FTE of Mediollegal Death Investigators to account for both the increased expected volume, and the newly increased workload of completing the full death investigations the State shifted from the State to the County was fully realized in FY25. Over the course of FY25 the MEO saw an increase in volume of cases. There was an additional increase in County required death investigation due to the State's shift in workload. As a result the County saw an increase in the response times to respond to on scene death investigations. Additionally we have seen an increase in our staffing leaves of absence partially driven by the increased expectations and workload, adding to the gap between demand and resources.