

Program #40052B - Additional Medical Examiner

Program Contact:

Department: Health Department Progra

Program Offer Type: Innovative/New Program Program Offer Stage: As Requested

Related Programs:

Program Characteristics: Out of Target

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'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.

Currently, the Multnomah County Medical Examiner employs 9 full time investigators to cover a 24/7/365 operation. Nationally, offices with comparable population and caseload employ a minimum of 10-13 investigators. With current staffing levels and heavy workload, any employee absence due to medical leave, illness or vacation negatively impacts the workplace, creating an unmanageable caseload for staff and decreased availability for timely response to families and completion of necessary paperwork.

Performance Measures									
Measure Type	Primary Measure	FY21 Actual	FY22 Budgeted	FY22 Estimate	FY23 Offer				
Output	Increase In-Person Investigations	1009	1200	1200	1350				
Outcome	increase in-person in home investigation to 2019 levels	62	61	61	68				

Performance Measures Descriptions

3/7/2022

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	Requested General Fund	Requested 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.