

Program #40052B - Adding One Deputy Medical Examiner

2/21/2018

Department: Health Department **Program Contact:** Kathryn Richer

Program Offer Type: Existing Operating Program Program Offer Stage: As Requested

Related Programs: 40052A

Program Characteristics: Out of Target

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 2,200 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 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 Medical Examiner's Office provides two full time staff members to conduct and assist with autopsies for both County and State cases. The Multnomah County ME Office is physically co-located with the Clackamas County and Oregon ME Offices in an Oregon State Police facility in Clackamas County.

Performance Measures									
Measure Type	Primary Measure	FY17 Actual	FY18 Purchased	FY18 Estimate	FY19 Offer				
Output	Increase Number of deaths requiring investigation- no impact on program output	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,550				
Outcome	Deputy Medical Examiner arrives on-scene within one hour for 90% of calls-improvement in outcome	N/A	N/A	N/A	80%				

Performance Measures Descriptions

This out of target offer for an additional investigator will help the program achieve its performance goals in FY2019.

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

	Proposed General Fund	Proposed Other Funds	Proposed General Fund	Proposed Other Funds
Program Expenses	2018	2018	2019	2019
Personnel	\$0	\$0	\$55,627	\$0
Materials & Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$7,219	\$0
Total GF/non-GF	\$0	\$0	\$62,846	\$0
Program Total: \$0		\$62,846		
Program FTE	0.00	0.00	0.30	0.00

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

Explanation of Revenues

Significant Program Changes

Last Year this program was:

The Multnomah County Medical Examiner's Office (MCMEO) currently employs a staff of six full-time Deputy Medical Examiners (aka Death Investigators) and one Chief Deputy Medical Examiner to cover an ORS-required 24/7/365 operation. The number of Death Investigators has remained the same since the early 1970s, despite a population increase of 30%. The objective of this proposal is to fund 0.30 FTE of a new 1.0 FTE Deputy Medical Examiner position to: 1)Increase the number of personnel available to respond to death scene investigations, death notifications and associated activities; 2) Increase death scene investigation response times; 3) Decrease the percentage of cases being reviewed by phone; 4) Decrease overtime of full-time staff, and improve case load, and decrease costs for on-call employees.