



Program #40052B - New Medical Examiner FTE 3/2/2021

Department: Health Department **Program Contact:** Jennifer Vines
Program Offer Type: Existing Operating Program **Program Offer Stage:** As Requested
Related Programs:
Program Characteristics: Out of Target

Executive Summary

The County Medical Examiner's Office (MEO) operates 24/7/365 under ORS Chapter 146 to determine the cause and manner of approximately 1 in 3 deaths in Multnomah County every year. The MEO contribute directly to the County's understanding of specific types of death, helping to inform county level responses related to suicide, violent deaths, COVID-19, overdoses and other leading causes of death. The MEO staff's ability to arrive on scene quickly directly affects the experience of loved ones who are otherwise alone with the deceased and law enforcement. This is a core public service that contributes to our fundamental understanding of disparities in morbidity and mortality among Multnomah County residents.

Program Summary

The MEO is involved in all deaths, with the exception of natural deaths occurring directly under physician care within certain timeframes and settings. As the majority of deaths investigated by the MEO are sudden and unexpected, they are uniquely positioned to help identify unusual and emerging causes of death and injury.

With a 25% increase in scene investigations in 2020, the MEO works directly and compassionately with loved ones to provide timely information regarding the cause and manner of death. Their work directly informs public health data used by the County and external partners to better serve, for example, the LGBTQ community, those experiencing homelessness and those facing mental health crisis and addiction.

Performance Measures

Measure Type	Primary Measure	FY20 Actual	FY21 Budgeted	FY21 Estimate	FY22 Offer
Output	Increase in overall number of deaths requiring investigation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Outcome	Increase in-person investigations for deaths in Multnomah County	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Outcome	Deputy Medical Examiner arrives on-scene within one hour for 90% of calls-improvement in outcome	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Performance Measures Descriptions

This out of target offer for an additional investigator will help the program manage the increase in deaths requiring investigation and the percentage of deaths where a Deputy Medical Examiner is able to respond in-person.

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	2021	2021	2022	2022
Personnel	\$0	\$0	\$107,175	\$0
Materials & Supplies	\$0	\$0	\$76	\$0
Internal Services	\$0	\$0	\$18,933	\$0
Total GF/non-GF	\$0	\$0	\$126,184	\$0
Program Total:	\$0		\$126,184	
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:

The Multnomah County Medical Examiner's Office (MCMEO) currently employs a staff of eight full-time Deputy Medical Examiners (aka Death Investigators) and one Chief Deputy Medical Examiner to cover an ORS-required 24/7/365 operation. Medical Examiner offices nationally, with comparable populations and caseload, employ between 10-13 investigative staff to respond to calls and manage caseload. Medical Examiner caseload steadily increases each year due to increases in overall population and increases in deaths requiring investigation (overdoses, accidents, homicides).

In FY21, the MEO managed a total of 2,631 cases, assuming jurisdiction in 1,753 cases. The MEO provided an in-person scene response in 1005 of the 2,631 cases. Of the 2,631 cases, approximately 400 are hospital deaths that do not require in-person investigation. The MEO experienced a 25% increase in jurisdiction cases due to increased cases involving overdoses, accidents, homicides, suicides and COVID-19. Additionally, there was a 35% increase in calls providing in-person investigation from FY20. The MEO was unable to respond in-person to approximately 40% of our overall cases due to staffing insufficiencies.