

Lead Agency: Health Department

Program Contact: OXMAN Gary L

Program Offer Type: Existing Operating

Related Programs:

Program Characteristics: In Target

Executive Summary

The County Medical Examiner's Office (ME) investigates and determines the cause and manner of Multnomah County residents' deaths occurring under specific circumstances. Approximately 2,200 of the County's 5,300 yearly deaths fall into this category. ME Office activities are highly visible to the public when an investigable death occurs in the community. ME staff are directly involved with the families and loved ones of deceased individuals as well as the responder community (police, fire, mortuary services, accident investigators) on a daily basis. The Office operates 24/7/365.

Program Description

Under ORS Chapter 146, the County is required to have a Medical Examiner (ME) Office to 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 prescription medication 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 ME Office is physically co-located with the Clackamas County and Oregon ME Offices in an Oregon State Police facility in Clackamas County. The County ME Office was transferred from the District Attorney to the Health Department in July 2011. The Health Department is re-establishing the ME Office's alignment with general Multnomah County procedures, systems, and culture.

Performance Measures

Measure Type	Primary Measure	Previous Year Actual (FY10-11)	Current Year Purchased (FY11-12)	Current Year Estimate (FY11-12)	Next Year Offer (FY12-13)
Output	Number of deaths requiring investigation	0	0	2,200	2,200
Outcome	Deputy Medical Examiner arrives on-scene within one hour for 90% of calls	0.0%	0.0%	90.0%	90.0%

Performance Measure - Description

 **Measure Changed**

Output: Number of deaths in Multnomah County that require investigations

Outcome: A Deputy Medical Examiner arrives on-scene in 90% of calls requiring on-scene investigation within one hour of first notification in order to support public safety, law enforcement, and affected members of the public.

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	2012	2012	2013	2013
Personnel	\$814,318	\$0	\$818,301	\$0
Contracts	\$65,500	\$0	\$50,000	\$0
Materials & Supplies	\$11,933	\$0	\$7,349	\$0
Internal Services	\$45,523	\$0	\$68,345	\$0
Total GF/non-GF:	\$937,274	\$0	\$943,995	\$0
Program Total:	\$937,274		\$943,995	
Program FTE	9.00	0.00	9.00	0.00
Program Revenues				
Total Revenue:	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Explanation of Revenues

The Medical Examiner's Office is funded by \$943,995 in county general fund

Significant Program Changes

✔ Significantly Changed

Last year this program was: #40052, Medical Examiner's Office

On July 1, 2011 management of the Medical Examiner's Office was transferred from the District Attorney's Office to the Health Department. Although the importance of the Office's contribution to law enforcement is well understood, the bulk of the Office's time and effort is dedicated to public health and safety or protecting the public from disease and injury. In the past, the Office had limited day-to-day interaction with the District Attorney's Office which resulted in a backlog of supervisory, supply, and management issues that need attention (e.g. job descriptions, performance evaluations, OSHA-required equipment, etc.). The Health Department's FY 2012-13 budget constraint is inadequate to support current ME Office services. This program offer includes no managerial or supervisory oversight for the program and staff. It reduces the Oregon State Police building support contract, which jeopardizes the State/County hybrid structure. It removes funding for OSHA-required equipment and for American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators certification training. Overtime for Deputy Medical Examiners is reduced by 67% and on-call for Deputy Medical Examiners and Pathologist Assistants by 62% relative to current utilization. This will significantly impact the ability of Deputy Medical Examiners to respond to death investigations 24/7/365, and Pathology Assistants' support of autopsies to certify cause and manner of death.