

Lead Agency: Health Department

Program Contact: Kathryn Richer

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 deaths which occur under specific circumstances in Multnomah County. Approximately 2,200 of the County's 6,300 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 Description

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 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	Previous Year Actual (FY11-12)	Current Year Purchased (FY12-13)	Current Year Estimate (FY12-13)	Next Year Offer (FY13-14)
Output	Number of deaths requiring investigation	2,128	2,200	2,150	2,200
Outcome	Deputy Medical Examiner arrives on-scene within one hour for 90% of calls	0.0%	90.0%	73.0%	70.0%

Performance Measure - Description

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.

The outcome measure was effective FY 13.

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	2013	2013	2014	2014
Personnel	\$836,906	\$0	\$882,626	\$0
Contracts	\$63,000	\$0	\$59,400	\$0
Materials & Supplies	\$13,778	\$0	\$10,464	\$0
Internal Services	\$68,345	\$0	\$67,364	\$0
Total GF/non-GF:	\$982,029	\$0	\$1,019,854	\$0
Program Total:	\$982,029		\$1,019,854	
Program FTE	8.80	0.00	8.80	0.00
Program Revenues				
Total Revenue:	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Explanation of Revenues

The Medical Examiner's Office is funded by \$1,019,854 in county general funds.

Significant Program Changes

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

For FY 13, the Medical Examiner Program received one-time-only funding. For FY 14 the Health Department is unable to back-fill the one-time-only funding at 100%, but is able to provide partial back-fill. This affects the program by reducing .40 FTE Deputy Medical Examiner.

Reducing Deputy Medical Examiner FTE will result in direct loss of service. Delayed response times would negatively affect families and friends of decedents, and also relationships with responder agencies whose personnel are required by law to stay on scene until the body is released by the DME, and/or those whose work is delayed/impacted.