

At a Glance

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

H. WAYNE CARVER, II, MD, *Chief Medical Examiner*

Edward T. McDonough, MD, *Deputy Chief Medical Examiner*

Established - 1970 Statutory authority - Sec. 19a-400 through 19a-415

Conn. Gen. Stat.

Address: 11 Shuttle Road, Farmington, Ct. 06032

Average number of employees - 52 full-time and 12 part-time

Recurring operating expenses, 2006-2007 - \$ 5,832,536.00

Organizational Structure: Independent agency comprised of 3 sections: Pathology, Laboratory and Management Services.

Mission

In Connecticut, all violent, sudden, unexpected and suspicious deaths, deaths related to employment or which constitute a threat to the public health, and deaths of people whose bodies are to be cremated, are reportable to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME). It is the mission of this Office to investigate these deaths, certify the cause and manner of death and provide information to legitimate interested parties as defined by law and regulation.

Statutory Responsibility

The Connecticut General Statutes concisely defines what deaths will be investigated. Because of the nature of death the Office has little control of the number of investigations. During the year 16,206 deaths were reported to OCME. After initial investigation, OCME took jurisdiction of 13,062 cases for further investigation. Staff investigators and/or Assistant Medical Examiners, serving in communities throughout the state, initially investigates each case. Of the total number of deaths reported, 11028 investigations included cremation. There were 1,740 medicolegal autopsies/examinations conducted at the Farmington facility. Of the autopsies performed at the OCME, 123 were homicide victims, a slight decrease from the previous fiscal year. Completed records of homicides, including toxicological analysis, were furnished to the state's attorneys.

The Office, located on the grounds of the University of Connecticut Health Center in Farmington, operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, year round. Our goal is to investigate deaths presented to this Office in a timely and high quality manner; release the body to the family within 24 hours and complete all required reports within ninety days of autopsy.

Public Service; Improvements/Achievements 2006-2007

The Office is functionally divided into three parts: Pathology Services; Laboratory Services and Management Services.

The Office finalized development and implemented digital photography to replace 35mm. This technology allows the office to add photos electronically to each electronic case file saving the cost purchasing film and processing. The Office has been accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners and the American Board of Forensic Toxicology.

Ongoing review of business practices continues to result in small, but important, steps to streamline and simplify office operations. We continue to utilize the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provided by the University of Connecticut Health Center.

The facility is under the control of the State Department of Public Works and managed by a private company. Health and safety issues are continually addressed with the expected result of a better environment for the employees and protection of evidence.

Connecticut has one of the largest databases of accumulated death investigation data in the country (over 251,206). The Office produced substantial computerized statistical reports during the year. Recipients include state's attorneys, public defenders, hospital quality control departments, researchers and the media.

In the toxicology and histology laboratories, we continue to invest in technological advances to more efficiently and effectively perform increasingly complex post mortem testing of tissue and fluids.

Pathology residents from hospital training programs in Connecticut, investigative interns from the University of Connecticut Health Center and master degree students in Forensic Sciences from the University of New Haven typically spend an elective rotation at OCME. Pathology assistants master degree candidates from Quinnipiac University spend a rotation observing and assisting in the performance of autopsies during this period.

An average of fifteen residents from several hospital pathology programs statewide participated in our forensic pathology seminar during 2006-2007. Educational programs were provided to law enforcement personnel at the Connecticut Municipal Police Academy and Connecticut State Police Training Academy, to medical students at the University of Connecticut Health Center, Yale University School of Medicine and to many professional and community groups across the state. Additionally, OCME continues to participate in many outreach programs that target juniors and seniors at the high school level.

OCME continues its ongoing initiative to continuously improve the quality and delivery of its critical services in a timely, efficient and caring manner, and is committed to equal opportunity and affirmative action for all.

Chapter 368q of the Connecticut General Statutes places OCME under the supervision of the Commission on Medicolegal Investigations. The commission met at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in Farmington on September 15, and November 13th of 2006, and on January 19, March 23 and May 18 of 2007.

Commission membership during fiscal year 2006-2007:

Chairman: Todd Fernow, JD, University of Connecticut Law School, Hartford;

Vice Chairman: Celia Pinzi, Public member, West Haven

Secretary: Robert E. Cone, Ph.D., Professor of Pathology, Univ of Ct Health Center, Farmington;

Daniel C. Niejadlik, M.D., Connecticut Medical Society

Steven B. Duke, JD, Professor of Law, Yale Univ, School of Law, New Haven;

Richard A. Lavelly, M.D., JD, MS, MPH, Connecticut Bar Association,

Robert Galvin, MD, Commissioner, Department of Public Health

Susan Keane Baker, MHA, Public member, New Canaan;

Steve Evans Downing, M.D., Professor of Pathology, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven; Dr. Downing retired as Chairman and was replaced by Mr. Todd Fernow.

As of June 30, 2007, there is one vacancy in the Commission.

Our website continues to be regularly accessed by interested individuals. Please visit our website at <http://www.state.ct.us/ocme>.

Office of the Governor
Executive Chambers
State Capitol
Hartford, CT 06106