**7 PROCESS REQUIREMENTS**

**7.1- 7.1.9 Inspection methods and procedures**

**7.1.1** The Medical Examiner’s Office performs postmortem examinations to conform to or exceed requirements in the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) Autopsy Performance Standard. The NAME Autopsy Performance Standard is the only autopsy performance standard developed by consensus and vetted and approved in the United States. It has also been endorsed by the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (IAC&ME).

**7.1.2** In additional to the NAME Standard, the Medical Examiner’s Office meets NAME accreditation checklist requirements, and has multiple other policies defining autopsy methods and procedures including:

* 1. Assuming Jurisdiction Over Remains
  2. Postmortem Examination
  3. Complete Autopsies; Limited Autopsies; and External Examinations
  4. Collection of Evidence at Autopsy in Cases of Suspicious Death
  5. Collection of Body Fluids, Samples, and Tissues at Autopsy/Transfer for Toxicologic Testing
  6. Storage, Retention, and Disposal of Items of Evidence, Body Fluids, and Tissues Removed at Autopsy
  7. Certification of Cause and Manner of Death
  8. Chain-of-evidence
  9. Accepting and releasing Bodies from the Medical Examiner’s Office

**7.1.3** It is not anticipated that the office would perform autopsies in a way that is non-standard, or would not conform to office policies or the NAME Autopsy Standard. If an unusual, supplemental dissection is performed during the course of an autopsy, the dissection is documented in the autopsy report and photographically.

**7.1.4** All office policies, written procedures, worksheets, checklists, and statistical data are available to all staff on the M-drive of the office computer system. The system is frequently updated. Specifically, all polices are reviewed every 2 years, with new versions placed in the M-drive, and dates of revisions noted. Statistical data is supplemented daily. Worksheets and checklists are evaluated as part of ongoing Quality Assessment with newest revisions available on the M-drive.

**7.1.5** Work order control is maintained in the Medical Examiner’s Office database. All death reports are added to the database in the “case review” function. Within 24 hours, one of the medical examiners reviews all deaths entered in review. As per NAME Autopsy Standard and Accreditation Checklist the medical examiner determines whether each reported case can be released from jurisdiction, accepted under jurisdiction for purposes of signing the death certificate, or accepted under jurisdiction and examined by autopsy or external examination. The on-call Medical Examiner assigns autopsy and case completion responsibility (for each decedent) to one forensic pathologist. Caseload and case completion are tracked for each medical examiner.

* 1. The office has adequate facilities, equipment, procedures, and personnel to meet requirements
  2. Requests about the autopsy itself for specific evidence or procedures (like GSR), or taking of remembrances such as a hair locket are recorded in the database narrative, in the decedent file. The Medical Examiner/FP makes all decisions about these requests, and ensures that the outcomes are communicated to the requester and documented.
  3. The office has peer review of varying types and intervals, and resultant corrective actions.
  4. The Medical Examiner’s Office performs autopsies to the same standard in jurisdiction cases and referral county autopsies. The agreements with referral counties give the Medical Examiner’s Office forensic pathologist all responsibility and autonomy for performing autopsies.

**7.1.6** All narrative information regarding the investigative scene is entered as directly observed or verified by the Medical legal death investigators or comes directly from another professional source such as law enforcement.

**7.1.7** The external autopsy examination is digitally recorded in “real time” during the autopsy. The internal examination is dictated immediately following autopsy. Most worksheets are completed during autopsy. Some autopsy notes are copied to permanent worksheets directly after autopsy or the note-board is photographed and uploaded to the database after autopsy. Photographs provide another record of autopsy observations.

**7.1.8** Textual material from autopsy dictation is uploaded directly after autopsy. The integrity of the upload is verified by administrative staff before transcription. Transcription is typically completed on the same day, or day following autopsy. The Forensic Pathologist who performed the autopsy proofreads and corrects the draft autopsy report. Separate digital media cards (photocards) are used for each autopsy with a backup card always placed in the camera. Photographs are uploaded in the database after the autopsy, and spot-verified in the database. The quality manager or delegated investigator checks photographs in the database at the end of each autopsy day.

**7.1.9** See medical examiner policies:

* Safety and Safety Committee
* Infectious Waste Management Plan and Infectious Disease Prevention Plan
* NAME accreditation checklist: A 4 Safety: a-j