**ISO/IEC 17020**

**6.3 Subcontracting**

**6.3.1** In normal circumstance, the Medical Examiner’s Office performs all autopsies in deaths coming under its legal jurisdiction, and all referral autopsies by agreement with surrounding counties. All autopsies are performed at the Medical Examiner’s autopsy facility. Subcontracting occurs in these instances:

1. In mass fatalities when the resources of the office are overwhelmed. The office Mass fatality Plan describes the capacity of the Medical Examiner in mass fatalities. The plan allows the use of the federal resource Disaster Mortuary Operations Response Team (DMORT).

2. Circumstances of specific autopsies require the use of outside expertise to perform parts of the examination. (NAME accreditation requires the availability of consultants: H5a) All referrals to consultants/outside experts are made by the forensic pathologist performing the autopsy.

* 1. Forensic Odontologist, board certified by the American Board of Forensic Odontology, to examine dentition and perform dental identification. Rarely, the Forensic Odontologist will be asked to examine a bite mark. (See Medical Examiner Policy: Examination of Human Bite Marks
  2. Forensic Anthropologist, board certified by the American Board of Forensic Anthropology, for skeletal remains
  3. Neuropathologist, board certified in Neuropathology by the American Board of Pathology, for examination of the brain, spinal cord, eyes, or any combination
  4. Cardiac Pathologist, Board certified by the American Board of Pathology in Anatomic Pathology

**See Also:** Policy: Medical Examiner Support Services

**6.3.2** All correspondence with consultants is saved along with consultative reports in the appropriate individual case file.

**6.3.3** When any of the above consultants/subcontractors carry out part of an autopsy, such as neuropathologic examination, the Forensic Pathologist retains responsibility for the final autopsy report, opinions on the final autopsy report, and the determination of cause and manner of death.

**6.3.4** Subcontracting Records:

1. For each body organ sent to a consultant for examination, Chain of Custody will be documented and the documentation will be retained in the specific decedent case file.
2. The medical examiner’s office will have a contract signed with the consultant/subcontractor that is specific to the examination to be performed, and is completed with all required decedent information including name, medical examiner case number, birthdate, date of death.
3. The administrative staff maintains a spreadsheet to track all organs sent to any consultant for examination. The staff uses the spreadsheet to monitor completion of the consultations. Organs returned after examination enter the retention program and schedule of the medical examiner’s office.
4. The administrative staff keeps a register of all consultants with contact information and verification of board certification.

**See Also:** Policy: Consultation and Laboratory Test Tracking