

*At a Glance*

**Office of the Chief Medical Examiner**

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

*Deputy Chief Medical Examiner – vacant (former incumbent retired)*

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

**Conn. Gen. Stat.**

*Address: 11 Shuttle Road, Farmington, Ct. 06032*

*Average number of employees – 60 full-time (authorized) and 11 part-time*

*Recurring operating expenses, 2008-2009 - \$ 5,790,363.*

**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 16,965 deaths were reported to OCME. After initial investigation, OCME took jurisdiction of 13,611 cases for further investigation. Staff investigators and/or Assistant Medical Examiners, serving in communities throughout the state, initially investigate each case. Of the total number of deaths reported, over 12,000 cases investigated included cremations resulting in \$1.2 million in cremation fees payable to the state. There were 1,851 medico legal autopsies/examinations conducted at the Farmington facility. Of the autopsies performed at the OCME, 130 were homicide victims, a slight increase 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 2008-2009**

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

**Legislative:** The agency received legislative approval of House Bill 6598 (Public Act 09-37) an act concerning the release of biologic material for genetic testing. This bill will codify granting the court the authority to order the OCME to release biologic material for the purposes of determining paternity or for determining a diagnosis of a life threatening illness or genetic disorder in a living individual. Additionally, the agency provided testimony on several other legislative bills submitted to the legislature by the Department of Public Health.

**Administrative:** The Office finalized development and implementation of the automated death certificates thus creating a substantial savings in the cost of forms purchased and reducing the amount of time taken to generate the type written forms. The agency is collaboratively working with the Department of Public Health to automate the death registry process whereby information can be transmitted electronically to the funeral homes and then in turn to the various registrars office.

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, well over 290,000 records. The Office produced substantial computerized statistical reports during the year. Recipients include state's attorneys, several state agencies, public defenders, hospital quality control departments, researchers and the media.

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

**Training Program:** 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 eighteen residents from several hospital pathology programs statewide participated in our forensic pathology seminar during 2008-2009. 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.

**Commission:** 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 12, and November 14<sup>th</sup> of 2008, and on January 23, March 20 and May 8 of 2009. During the January 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting, nomination for a slate of officers was made. On motion duly made, seconded and approved, it was voted that Todd Fernow, J.D., John Sinard, MD, PHD and Robert Cone, PHD, serve respectively as Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary of the Commission on Medico legal Investigations for 2009.

**Commission membership during fiscal year 2008-2009:**

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

Vice Chairman: John Sinard, M.D., Connecticut Medical Society

Secretary: Robert E. Cone, Ph.D., Professor of Pathology, Univ of Ct Health Center, Farmington  
Celia Pinzi, Public member, West Haven

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

Frank Scarpa, MD, Connecticut Medical Society

**Information Reported as Required by State Statute**

The agency remains committed to the principles of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity. As in prior years, the agency's affirmative action plan submitted to the C.H.R.O. was approved. Additionally, the agency exceeded its set side goals for small and minority business enterprise contracts. As required by state statute, the agency supplies yearly information to the Office of Policy and Management, Office of Fiscal Analysis and Office of the State Comptroller.

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  
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