

OSCME NEWSLETTER

Call for Reports!

In order to fulfill the Office of the State Chief Medical Examiner responsibilities as required by Tennessee Code Annotated § 38-7-102 and increase consistency and improve death investigation, the OSCME must keep “full and complete records of all reports on investigations and examinations made pursuant to this part (Post Mortem Examination Act).” All investigated deaths must be reported to the OSCME, whether an autopsy is ordered or not, including those deaths reported to you even if jurisdiction is declined. For those registered in the I-MED database you can enter the report directly, bypassing the need to submit a hard copy. If you would like to register in the I-MED database just click on the link http://apps.health.tn.gov/Medical_Examiner/ or enter the URL into your search engine online and register. The OSCME will alert you when you have been approved as a user and will send by email a User Guide.

If you are currently entering all investigative information into a form or database consistent with the State’s ROI you may print that report and e-mail, fax or mail to the OSCME as a substitute for the state ROI form. You may also complete the State Report of Investigation form either by hand or using the fillable online pdf and submit it to the OSCME by email, postal mail or fax.

Use the following address: Office of the State Chief Medical Examiner, Andrew Johnson Tower, 7th Floor, 710 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, TN 37243, or fax to 615-401-2532, or email to OSCME.ROI@tn.gov.

TNVDRS

We are very excited to announce the initiation of the Tennessee Violent Death Reporting System at the Office of the State Chief Medical Examiner this year. TNVDRS is a state surveillance reporting system that collects and transfers aggregate **de-identified** data on violence-related deaths into the National Violent Death Reporting System web-managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In an effort to reduce violence-related fatalities, many states have established remarkable NVDRS-data-driven violent death prevention initiatives. With the help of all public health and safety stakeholders we can take a stand here in Tennessee as well as cause positive influence in our neighborhoods’ health. Reducing these violence-related deaths depends on unwavering support and commitment of community leaders, academia, health departments, regional forensic centers, law enforcement agencies, county medical examiners, and the judicial system, amongst other interested parties. Public health and safety stakeholders can request to be part of the TNVDRS project by joining the advisory committee, providing

data, or utilizing the violent death data in focused research efforts once data collection is completed.

We would like to extend our thanks to the Advisory Committee members who have partnered with the TNVDRS team in its effort to reduce violent deaths in Tennessee. TNVDRS is currently collecting data from our pilot counties, Davidson and Shelby, but will be collecting data from all 95 Tennessee counties starting January 2020. Therefore, we encourage stakeholders statewide to be actively involved in this project. We would like to thank and recognize our active pilot county data providers, in particular the Davidson County Medical Examiner’s Office, Metro Nashville Police Department, and Tennessee Bureau of Investigation; as well as those agencies that we are working together with to establish partner-agreements, to include Memphis Police Department, Shelby County Sheriff’s Office, and Shelby County Medical Examiner’s Office.

The first TNVDRS quarterly advisory committee meeting was held on January 4th, 2019 followed by the second on April 12th, 2019; two more meetings will be held during the remainder of 2019.

The following lists TNVDRS team’s currently scheduled future events:

Table 1: Tennessee Violent Death Reporting System future events

| Event | Date | Time | Location |
|--|--|--|-----------------|
| Host 3 rd TNVDRS quarterly meeting/CDC site visit | July 12 th , 2019 | 8:00AM – 3:00PM | Nashville, TN |
| Attend Tennessee Chiefs of Police Annual Conference | July 24 th -25 th , 2019 | 7/24: 4:00PM-7:00PM 7/25:8:00AM-4:00PM | Chattanooga, TN |
| Attend Tennessee Sheriffs Annual Summer Conference | July 30 th – July 31 st , 2019 | 7/30:10:00AM-4:00PM 7/31:10:00AM-4:00PM | Sevierville, TN |
| Host 4 th TNVDRS quarterly meeting | October 11 th , 2019 | TBA | Nashville, TN |

The Office of the State Chief Medical Examiner website (<https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/oscme.html>) includes a fillable cremation permit, a request for medical records template and training and continuing education event schedule.

INFORMATION

Legislative Update

HB1005/SB0620 This bill amended the so-called “suicide bill” for the third time in as many years. As enacted, it dictates a meeting with the “county medical examiner who performed the autopsy”, then may appeal to the state chief medical examiner, who will convene a “peer review panel” consisting of regional forensic center chiefs or their designees, with the exception of the RFC in which autopsy was performed. The state chief ME will only vote in case of a tie. This law applies to deaths occurring on or after April 24, 2019, when it was signed by Governor Lee.

HB0322/SB0272 This bill adds the speaker of the House of Representatives and the speaker of the Senate or their designee(s) to the Medical Examiner Advisory Council as permanent ex-officio voting members. It became effective July 1, 2019. Stay tuned.

HB0461/SB0129 Also concerns the ME-AC: period until sunset was extended to June 30, 2025, instead of the previously scheduled June 30, 2019.

HB0163/SB1202 This bill dictated that only the relevant district attorney or the state chief medical examiner have the authority to order autopsies, effectively obliterating the county medical examiner system. The National Association of Medical Examiners was proactive on hearing of this and submitted a letter of opposition to lawmakers. The bill was withdrawn by its sponsors, but could reappear in 2020’s legislative session.



Drs. Lewis and Hawes Speaking to the House Health Committee

Deaths of Foreign Nationals

If you have a death of a foreign national, ensure that the nearest consulate of that national’s country is notified of the death. Below is a notification fact sheet from the Department of State on how to properly report deaths of foreign nationals. The decedent’s embassy or consulate could also be a good resource to assist with locating relatives and/or obtaining information for identification purposes.

The requirement to notify a consular officer in cases of deaths of foreign nationals is addressed in Article 37(a) of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Article 5 recognizes the functions of consular officers relating to deaths and estates.

Definitions

Foreign national: any person who is not a U.S. citizen. Note that green card holders/permanent resident aliens are not U.S. citizens.

Consul/consular officer: foreign government official accredited by the U.S. Department of State to provide assistance on behalf of that government to that government’s citizens in the U.S.

When to Notify the Foreign Consul

If you become aware of the death of a foreign national in the United States, you must ensure that the nearest consulate of that national’s country is notified of the death without delay. This permits the foreign government to make an official record of the death for its own legal purposes. For example, such notice helps ensure that passports and other legal documentation issued by that country are canceled and not reissued to fraudulent claimants.

In addition, it helps ensure that the foreign national’s family and legal heirs, if any, in the foreign country are aware of

the death and that the death is known for estate purposes in the foreign national’s country. Once notified of a death, consular officers may in some circumstances act to conserve the decedent’s estate, in accordance with the laws and regulations applicable in the jurisdiction.



How to Notify the Foreign Consul

Contact the decedent’s embassy or nearest consulate. You can provide notification by email, fax or a phone call. You may use the Suggested Fax Sheet for Notifying Consular Officers of Death or Serious Injuries. This form is on our web page at travel.state.gov/CNA. Phone numbers, fax numbers and email addresses for foreign embassies and consulates are also at travel.state.gov/CNA. Keep a written record of the date, time and method of notification in the event questions regarding notification arise later, including a copy of the sent email or fax receipt.

For Guidance and Information:

Contact the CNA Team

Website travel.state.gov/CNA
Phone 202-485-7703
Email consnot@state.gov

Please refer to the OSCME website under Resources for the County Medical Examiner for additional information.

TRAINING

Medicolegal Death Investigation Training Bridging the Gap Series



“Bridging the Gap: Child Deaths and Gunshot-Related Deaths; A Team Approach to Death Investigation”
Montgomery Bell State Park, May 2019

The OSCME and MTSU Fire wrapped up the 2018-2019 Justice Assistance Grant Cycle at Montgomery Bell State Park in May, 2019. Thank you to all who lectured and attended the six JAG trainings held in the Fall of 2018 and Spring of 2019. We are in the process of developing the new class for the 2019-2020 cycle. Watch your email for information on dates, locations and links to registration.


Death Investigation 101 Not Just the Basics

The Office of the State Chief Medical Examiner offers a training specific for county medical examiners and county death investigators. This one-day training provides information on the death investigation system in Tennessee, the role and responsibility of the CME and CMEI, identifying medical examiner cases, cause and manner of death and provides some hands-on training with mock scenes.

If you have a training space and are interested in hosting a training in your county please contact our office at 844-860-4511 or email Fran Wheatley at frances.wheatley@tn.gov.

The OSCME provides lunch for the event and EMS and POST credits are available.

Special thanks to Dr. Linder in McNairy and Chester counties, and Jason Owens in Sevier county for hosting us this Spring, 2019.

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