

BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE FACT SHEET

STRENGTHENING THE MEDICAL EXAMINER-CORONER SYSTEM PROGRAM

Program Summary

The medicolegal death investigation (MDI) workforce is experiencing a national shortage of practicing, board-certified forensic pathologists. Furthermore, there is variability in the practice of death investigation across the United States, resulting in an inconsistent provision of MDI services. This program was initiated in 2017 to increase the number of practicing, board-certified forensic pathologists and to strengthen the quality and consistency of medical examiner-coroner (ME/C) services to ensure equitable application of death investigation services.

Two purpose areas are funded under this program: (1) forensic pathology fellowships, and (2) ME/C office accreditation.

Program Funding and Awards

Since 2017, this program has made 98 awards totaling \$14.4 million.

Fiscal Year	Fellowship (Purpose Area 1)		Accreditation (Purpose Area 2)	
	Number of Awards	Funds Awarded	Number of Awards	Funds Awarded
2017	7	\$795,184	7	\$1,536,896
2018	8	\$874,420	6	\$1,608,351
2019	8	\$998,892	7	\$832,531
2020	12	\$1,402,299	3	\$304,799
2021	8	\$1,433,917	5	\$616,083
2022	7	\$1,378,459	6	\$662,695
2023	6	\$1,350,000	8	\$700,000

Program Accomplishments

Fellowship/Purpose Area 1

- 61 fellowships have been funded by this program.
- 43 participants have completed fellowship training using program funds.
- 10,710 deaths were investigated by the program-funded fellows.
- 11,540 autopsies were performed by the program-funded fellows.

Accreditation/Purpose Area 2

- 148 individuals have sought certification using program funds.
- 28 individuals achieved certification using program funds.
- 14 organizations have achieved accreditation using program funds.

Please note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many grantees' program goals were delayed, especially with respect to accreditation. Also, many awards close prior to achieving accreditation, so that metric goes unreported.



Grantee Spotlight and Program Highlights

Montgomery County Forensic Services Department (MCFSD), TX

The Strengthening the ME/C program grant funding has enabled Montgomery County Forensic Services Department (MCFSD), located in Texas, to fund a contract/per diem forensic pathologist on a regular basis to assist with the autopsy caseload. This hire has brought Montgomery County's autopsy numbers per pathologist below 250, which is critical to meeting the accreditation requirements. Montgomery County was also able to use funding to certify one medicolegal death investigator (MLDI) through American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI) and send two more MLDI's to training conferences this year. These activities would not have been possible with the constraints of their regular county budget – especially with the increasing number of cases, the high costs of supplies, and the need for more expanded toxicology testing.

The 2023 Forensic Pathology Match Program Update

Of the 46 U.S. accredited forensic pathology fellowship programs (78 total positions), 40 programs participated in the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) National Resident Matching Program (NRMP), offering a total of 70 positions. The Match was held on May 3rd, 2023 for positions starting in July, 2024. There were 47 match applicants and all but two applicants matched (i.e., 95.7% applicants matched). 50% of the forensic pathology (FP) programs in the Match filled, and 64% of the positions filled. The application numbers are similar to recent years in that a handful of positions this year were available outside of the match. The data indicates there is not a shortage of FP fellowship positions but rather a shortage of applicants. A survey of the fellow applicants (55% response rate) was conducted by NAME. This survey found that 4 of 5 residents matched with their first choice and 88% were "definitely" satisfied with their match outcome. The next FP match date is scheduled for May 1, 2024 for July 2025 positions.

Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office, WI

The Medical College of Wisconsin Affiliated Hospitals, Inc., (MCWAH) maintains an agreement with Milwaukee County, represented by Wieslawa Tlomak, MD, Milwaukee County Medical Examiner, on behalf of its forensic pathology fellowship program, for the express purpose of providing a teaching and training site conducive to self-study and professional growth in the field of forensic pathology.

The forensic pathology fellowship program at the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office (MCMEO) is sponsored by MCWAH. The forensic pathology fellows are generally considered to be employees of MCWAH, and the specific terms of their employment are governed by MCWAH. However, the fellows are under the direction of the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's staff forensic pathologists.

Learn More

For additional information about this program, see the ME/C System Program web page: <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/strengthening-mec/overview>

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