



*American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
International Association for Identification
National Association of Medical Examiners
Society of Forensic Toxicologists/ American Board of Forensic Toxicology*

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HHS REQUEST

Support the President's budget request for the National Violent Death Reporting System and the Opioid Overdose Prevention and Surveillance grants.

Include attached report language to develop a strategic plan to implement the recommendations of the Medicolegal Death Investigation-Data-Working Group (MDI-DATA-WG) and direct the CDC to ensure a portion of the funding for NVDRS be used to support work done by medical examiner/coroner offices.

STATUS

Death certificates save lives. If a government wants to know how to improve public health, it must know what is causing death. For example, with the opioid crisis, it is important to know who and how many are dying, where the deaths are occurring, and from what specific drugs. This early warning data and information can guide treatment, rehabilitation therapy, and interdiction. In addition to the CDC's important work in vital statistics, their role in forensic medicine and science is growing. It is critical to ensure proper investigation and identification of public health and safety threats. The public health community uses numerous database tools to assist in policies to ensure the safety of our citizens. These should electronically gather data from all 50 states and 14 territories. Unfortunately, only 47 of the 50 states and 14 territories are covered by the State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (SUDORS). And while the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) is in all 50 states, many jurisdictions use inefficient, manual extraction to obtain the data. While the CDC is working on developing a coordinating office for the medical examiner/coroner community, these medicolegal death investigators need to be recognized as distinct members of the public health community. Currently, funding support for medical examiner or coroner (ME/C) offices goes directly to public health departments rather than directly to the ME/C, resulting in inefficient and usually delayed funding use.

BACKGROUND

The Control Research Centers involved with Opioid Overdose Prevention Programs, SUDORS, and the NVDRS are critical resources to obtain timely and high-quality morbidity and mortality information. Medical examiner and coroner offices are the principal data sources for these programs. This information allows for the reliable assessment of the effectiveness of various preventative programs and to adjust treatment strategies as changes are identified regionally.

The CDC is creating a coordinating office for medical examiners and coroners within the NCHS. The CDC has supported the MDI-DATA-TWG to guide this new office. This office will promote quality and consistency in death investigation and cause of death information. It also will establish a line of communication to facilitate questions and issues that arise with death certification. This collaboration between CDC and state and local forensic science service providers and forensic science medical providers is necessary to address data collection and data sharing of drug trends, death investigations, and other emerging threats in our country.

POC

Beth Lavach, 703-622-8752, bethlavach@elsandassociates.com