



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

February 2, 2024

The Honorable Mandy Cohen
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director
US Department of Health and Human Services
1600 Clifton Road, NE
Mail Stop D-72
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

Dear Director Cohen,

The Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations is a collaborative of the leading forensic science organizations in the United States representing over 21,000 forensic science practitioners including virtually all forensic science laboratory, medical examiner office, and coroner office leaders. We are writing to respectfully request a meeting with you and the appropriate staff in your organization.

As you know, the casework for toxicology labs, medical examiners, and coroners (MEC) has increased exponentially over the last several years. This casework is exacerbated by the fentanyl crisis. The workforce shortage of forensic pathologists has made this matter urgent in the medical examiner and coroner field. According to the CDC, rates of overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids increased over 22% from 2020 to 2021. The rate of overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids in 2021 was nearly 22 times the rate in 2013. The average annual growth in forensic science backlog in the United States from 2013 to 2020 was 110.3% in toxicology.

This dramatic increase has created a strain on our forensic science community. The CDC is an invaluable partner to the state, county, and local forensic service providers both from a budget and policy perspective. We have recently met with the leadership of our member organizations and compiled a document of our current needs and concerns that we would like to share with your office. Specifically, we would like to discuss the following:

1. Funding:

1. Information technology infrastructure, including network infrastructure and case management system operability and interoperability for medical examiner and coroner offices.
2. The ability of forensic science service providers and MEC offices to apply directly for CDC grants.
3. Support for the operational needs of medical examiner, and coroner offices.
4. Funding for MEC offices to obtain and maintain advanced imaging technologies (e.g., postmortem computed tomography, PMCT).

2. Research:

1. Research needed in forensic science areas such as pharmacology of emerging drugs.

3. Operation:

1. Education and workforce development training programs in support of medicolegal death investigators, forensic pathologists, and toxicologists entering the forensics field.
2. Exploring potentials for regional collaboratives and cooperative agreements among medical examiner and coroner offices.
3. Certification for forensic autopsy technicians.
4. Required and supported training for DMORT teams.

We look forward to hearing from you about scheduling a meeting or meetings to discuss these important topics.

Matthew Gamette-CFSO Chair
On behalf of the CFSO Board of Directors
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