



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

Forensic Science Service Providers (FSSP), which include Medical Examiners and Coroners as well as crime laboratories, play an important role in the daily operations of our legal and public health systems. They are now becoming an increasingly larger part of the current COVID-19 crisis. The medical examiner and coroners, who are critical parts of the public health systems in the United States, are being negatively impacted by the present COVID-19 crisis. This is true, particularly considering the severe shortage of forensic pathologists in America. Specifically, the ME/C offices need immediate attention so they can:

- Diagnose deaths from COVID-19 and determine decedents needing an autopsy;
- Interact safely with next of kin and first responders helping with body identifications;
- Perform autopsies under safe conditions recommended by the CDC;
- Provide timely disposition of bodies to next of kin for public health reasons, religious and burial considerations, and insurance purposes;
- Provide timely data to public health and government officials investigating causes of these deaths, which plays a role in developing a National Health strategy to defeat COVID-19.

Although demands change from day-to-day and from region to region across the country, the ME/C offices, depending on the regions of the country they represent, have been completely overwhelmed by additional sudden and unexplained deaths that are suspected COVID-19 cases. In jurisdictions most affected, ME/Cs are deploying Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams (DMORT). In some jurisdictions, the additional deaths reported must be investigated, and may need to be brought within the ME/C jurisdiction for examination and issuance of death certificates. This document highlights the results of a survey of over 21,000 forensic science practitioners in the United States represented by the Consortium of Forensic Service Organizations (CFSO).

The CFSO has identified the most critical needs for all FSSPs in the United States. This document isolates some of those most critical and immediate needs of the ME/C offices. Their most immediate and critical needs are PPE, body storage, and rapid testing capability for COVID.

Specifically, ME/Cs have identified the following critical needs:

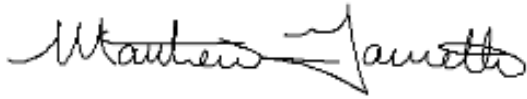
- Rapid COVID screening tests in ME/C offices for deceased individuals;
- Funding for outsourcing COVID testing if rapid instruments/reagents cannot be obtained;
- Funding for cremation, burial, short-term internment, and mass cold storage of COVID-19 and also non-COVID decedents without family resources or where the mortuary services are overwhelmed to avoid a public health disaster;
- Funding for mass fatality storage managers, coordinators, and facilitators;
- MAXAIR CAPR Systems, with all the accessories. This system is a reusable PPE. This system is an advanced respiratory protection equipment approved by NIOSH for protection against aerosolized and airborne particulates. It is compact, lightweight, computerized, no-hose powered air-purifying respirator. Filtration particle size encompasses viruses such as the coronavirus.

- Funding for equipment to decontaminate current equipment and PPE since there is a nationwide shortage of such items and it is presently unknown when these items may be available.
- Funding for additional support staff to handle the increased administrative duties such as answer telephones, contact family, health care providers, and to coordinate with funeral services providers to name a few.

Attachment 1 provides a list of needs that are developing in the high COVID-19 stressed FSSPs.

Sincerely,

The Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Gamette". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M" and "G".

Matthew Gamette M.S., C.P.M.
Chair,
Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations

Attachment 1

PPE including:

- MAXAIR CAPR Systems with all accessories (reusable PPE listed above)
- N95 Respirators
- P100 Partial face respirators
- Disposable Laboratory Coats
- Disposable Coveralls/Tyvek Suits
- Scrubs
- Gowns
- Goggle eye protection including face shields
- Nitrile and Latex Gloves
- Shoe covers
- Knee-high rubber boots

Critical equipment/supplies including:

- Accurate and rapid COVID tests
- Funding for and sources of off-site accurate COVID testing (if rapid not available)
- Laboratory ovens for decontaminating masks
- Submersible autopsy bone saws with HEPA filter vacuum attachments
- Category B shipping materials

Staffing needs:

- Logistics staff for assisting with mortuary services
- Epidemiological data staff
- Contract cleaning services
- Additional/temporary staff for body transport
- Overtime funds for increased workload and coverage for infected/quarantined staff

Sample collection supplies including:

- Viral culture transport media with Dacron swab kits for sample collection from decedents – these are very difficult to obtain at this time as provisions are low and / or on backorder; we have managed to procure separately, swabs, sterile plastic tubes and sterile phosphate buffered saline as an alternative to purchasing the “kit”
- Viral and Molecular Transportation Media (VTM and MTM)
- Bio-hazard bags for evidence

Operational equipment including:

- Closed container tissue homogenizers to reduce exposure to aerosols and sprays from the homogenizing and blending of tissues and gastric contents during the testing process
- Biological safety cabinets with ultraviolet disinfection lights
- Ultraviolet decontamination chambers/boxes

Operational and cleaning supplies including:

- Cavicide wipes and sprays
- Quaternary disinfectants to clean autopsy and lab areas (e.g., Virex)
- Commercial disinfectant wipes, sprays/cleaners (e.g., Clorox, Lysol, Pine-sol, etc.)
- Decontamination sprayers/mist foggers for larger areas and vehicles
- Bench lining material to maintain clean work sites

Body Storage and Transport

- Improved facility infrastructure

- Separate storage facilities for COVID-19 decedents
- Negative air pressure systems for autopsy rooms
- Infectious disease autopsy rooms
- Body bags (6 handle medium duty and 8 handle heavy duty with liners)
- Identification wristbands
- MERC cooling blanket systems
- Plastic body shrouds
- Mass fatality pack seals (e.g., BioSeal Systems)
- Body/power lifts for bodies
- Body transport stretchers
- Transport vehicles for decedents
- Temporary body storage racks
- Portable cooling units
- Collapsible body storage units
- Absorbent barrier pads
- Refrigerated trailers with pallets (including funding for leasing/purchasing/remodeling refrigeration storage space)
- Centralized cold storage options with personnel to remove the burden of body management from the ME/C offices
- Temporary morgue and storage facilities (i.e, Disaster Portable Morgue Units)

General Supplies

- Scalpels
- Formalin

Bio-hazard waste collection service and supplies:

- Biohazard waste bags and sharps containers
- Suitable biohazard waste collection services

Off-Site Facilities

- Supplemental hand wash stations
- Canopies, tents and portable shelters
- Holding/staging areas
- Generators
- Burn sheets to create sterile surfaces in the field
- Disposable cell phones
- Work tables and chairs
- File folders, writing instruments, staplers and other office supplies
- Printing equipment
- Cameras

NEAR TERM CRITICAL NEEDS FOR ME/C OFFICES:

Laboratory/Morgue/Dental Equipment

- Autopsy tables
- Gurneys
- CT scanners (mobile and high throughput)
- Imaging devices (e.g., Lodox)
- Portable X-Ray systems (e.g., Nomad Pro-2 Portable w/MiPacs Viewer and Developer)

- Rapid DNA instruments and kit reagents
- Digital fingerprint scanners

NEAR TERM CRITICAL NEEDS FOR FORENSIC LABS:

Critical equipment/supplies including:

- Lockers or transfer chambers in which customers may securely leave evidence items to minimize staff being in close physical proximity to customers
- Plexiglass shields ("sneeze guards") to protect administrative and evidence staff from customers
- Automobile gun safes/locks to store evidence or case files
- Lockable home storage cabinets for evidence or case files

IT Infrastructure including:

- VPN licenses
- IT training on VPN and technology for employees working remotely
- Laptop computers or tablets
- Teleconference accounts for large groups
- Internet connectivity increases at agencies to host more remote employees
- Web-based Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS)
- Software licenses for laptops (Adobe, docuSign, forensic software)
- Printers/Scanners

Staffing needs:

- IT support staff
- Salary funds due to municipalities' fiscal obligations (furloughs and hiring freezes have already started in some jurisdictions due to budget concerns)