

Issue Brief – Medical Examiner - Equipment

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

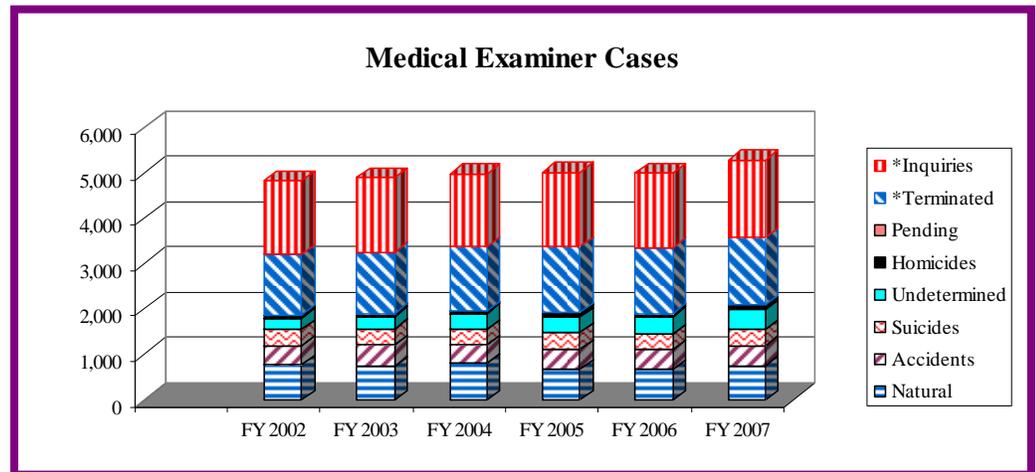
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SUMMARY

The Office of the Medical Examiner (OME) is responsible for the investigation and certification of any sudden and/or unexpected death, which occurs within the State of Utah. The OME is involved to a varying degree in approximately 25 percent of the deaths in Utah each year. The Office of the Medical Examiner provides information and expertise to health care providers, EMTs, law enforcement officials, the courts and attorneys concerning issues relating to death and injury within Utah. Over the past five years, the total number of cases handled by the Medical

Examiner has grown from 4,834 (FY 2002) to 5,283 (FY 2007), an increase of 9.3%.

The Inquiries and Terminated Cases are not examined by the Medical Examiner's Office but they are processed and investigated. The Analyst recommends that old equipment be replaced to support the ongoing operations of the Medical Examiner's Office. The last five years' activities are detailed to the right.



OBJECTIVE

The histology equipment needs to be replaced to support the ongoing operations of the Medical Examiner's Office. Some of the current equipment proposed for replacement is 12 years old and is breaking down. This equipment is used to examine specimen samples to test for the presence of various substances. This information is an important part to determine how an individual died.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The Office of the Medical Examiner only gets involved in cases as specified in Utah Code 26-4-7. As more cases qualify for review, the Medical Examiner's workload increases. The results of autopsies establish the cause of the death as well as contribute to evidence provided in criminal investigations. Maintenance of the Medical Examiner's ability to provide quality information is dependent upon the instruments available to the office. The current equipment is passed its useful life and needs replacing. One alternative suggestion from the Medical Examiner's for taking care of the services provided by the equipment is outsourcing the service at annual cost of \$120,000. The cost of purchasing the equipment for in-house work is \$120,000. The ongoing portion of the request is \$70,000 for maintenance.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

- The Analyst recommends that the Subcommittee place \$70,000 ongoing General Fund and \$50,000 one-time General Fund on its priority list for new Medical Examiner equipment.