OSAC RESEARCH NEEDS ASSESSMENT FORM



Title of research need: Medicolegal Death Investigator Workload Analysis			
Keyword(s): Death investigation, workload, mixed methods, investigations			
Submitting subcommittee(s):	MDI	Date Approved:	6/30/2025
Background Information:			
1. Does this research need address a gap(s) in a current or planned standard? (ex.: Field identification system for on scene opioid detection and confirmation)			
Yes, there is a standard currently being worked on for MDI workload.			
2. Are you aware of any ongoing research that may address this research need that has not yet been published (e.g., research presented in conference proceedings, studies that you or a colleague have participated in but have yet to be published)?			
No.			
3. Key bibliographic references relating to this research need: (ex.: Toll, L., Standifer, K. M., Massotte, D., eds. (2019). Current Topics in Opioid Research. Lausanne: Frontiers Media SA. doi: 10.3389/978-2-88963-180-3)			
There is currently a deficit in the literature as no studies on workload have been performed examining the acceptable caseloads for medicolegal death investigators in medical examiner and coroner offices. There is, however, a large body of research on workloads in other professions. An example of this would be studies examining nursing professionals.			
4. Review the annual operational/research needs published by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) at https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/forensic-science-research-and-development-technology-working-group-operational#latest ? Is your research need identified by NIJ?			
No.			
5. In what ways would the research results improve current laboratory capabilities?			
Evaluating scene investigation caseload for medicolegal death investigators, and their perceptions of the scene investigation caseload's effects on a proper medicolegal investigation.			

The laboratory in which medicolegal death investigators work is that of a medical examiner/coroner office. Their work in the field plays an integral role in evaluating the available information of the death scene, as well as thorough

jurisdiction. Proper certification of decedents' deaths is an imperative function of both public health and safety.

follow-up work to help certify the cause and manner of death of individuals that fall under their

6. In what ways would the research results improve understanding of the scientific basis for the subcommittee(s)?

There is currently no data to support standards associated with medicolegal professionals. This study would fill that gap by not only evaluating office-based factors, but the professionals' views on their workplace and workload.

7. In what ways would the research results improve services to the criminal justice system?

Medicolegal death investigators perform parallel, yet separate, investigations as law enforcement when a death has occurred. The investigation by medicolegal death investigators, and the eventual certification of death by the forensic pathologist, are an essential function that law enforcement agencies utilize in their evaluation of whether or not a crime has been committed.

8. Status assessment (I, II, III, or IV): Ī Major gap in Minor gap in current current knowledge knowledge No or limited current research is Ш being conducted **Existing** current research is being II conducted

This research need has been identified by one or more subcommittees of OSAC and is being provided as an informational resource to the community.