

PUBLIC SAFETY COORDINATING COUNCIL

MINUTES

TUESDAY,
May 22, 2018

11:32

JUSTICE BUILDING -
JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM, 2ND FLOOR

MEETING CALLED BY	Bob Kleker
ATTENDEES	Dave Carter, Joe Charter, Marie Curren, Doug Engle, Amber Freitas, Bill Froehlich, Eric Guyer, Beth Heckert, Bob Kleker, Lee Tyler, Jennifer Lind, Lorenzo Mejia, Robert Mountain, Mark Orndoff, Dan Pendland, Mark Reagles, John Stromberg, Bob Strosser

- Bob Kleker opened the meeting at 11:32
- Opening Remarks: Bob Kleker welcomed everyone to the May PSCC meeting.

Agenda Topics

MINUTE ADOPTION – APRIL

BOB KLEKER, CHAIR

DISCUSSION	
No suggested revisions were identified for the April minutes, Dave Carter provided a motion to adopt, seconded by Jennifer Lind. A vote was requested, all were in favor, and none were opposed. The April minutes were officially adopted.	

MEDICAL EXAMINER OVERVIEW OF 2017

DISCUSSION	
<p><i>Det. Tim Pike – Jackson County Sheriff's Office</i></p> <p>The purpose of this presentation is to provide a quick overview of what the Jackson County Medical Examiner's (JCME) Office does, what the JCME Office is about, and to provide data regarding Jackson County. Oregon became a Medical Examiner state in 1963 and as stated in ORS 146.090 "the medical examiner shall investigate and certify the cause and manner of all human deaths that are apparently homicidal, suicidal, suspicious, resulting from controlled substances, police custody, accidental, following an injury, disease, injury or toxic agent during or arising from employment, not under the care of a physician, disease which might constitute a threat to public health, human body has been disposed of in an offensive manner." There are five appointed Medical Examiners (ME) that are forensic pathologist in Oregon. Dr. James Olson is responsible for Southern Oregon and is responsible for covering six counties full-time.</p> <p>The JCME's Office is staffed by two full-time ME's that work 24/7 – 365 days a year. Each ME works a 12 hour shift, but there is also a part-time ME that the JCME Office can utilize. Det. Pike explained that the ME's take a death investigator course from the University of St Louis School of Medicine and every two years they return for supplementary training. Additional training is done at the Oregon State ME's Office in Clackamas. Det. Pike is a nationally certified death investigator; the process takes about a year to receive a board certification (ABMDI). Other types of investigation classes that the JCME's can and have attended are about drowning, motor vehicle accidents, suicides, etc. Originally the Health Department was responsible for maintaining the budget for the JCME's Office, it was then transferred to the DA's Office, and is now the responsibility of the Jackson County Sheriff Department.</p> <p>Bob Kleker asked if the ORS requires that the county hold the budget. Det. Pike explained that each county is responsible for the death investigation portion, but the State oversees it and provides the pathologists. Josephine County does not have any full-time staff to go to death scenes, so it will typically be a sheriff or a police officer. Because of this Dr. Olson will do more autopsies in Josephine County because he will only have a police report and the deceased person. Dr. Olson does not have an ME to talk to the deceased's family members and collect the deceased's medical history. Whereas in Jackson County Dr. Olson has ME's that can explain the cause of death which allows him to sign the death certificate without the need to do an autopsy.</p> <p>Natural death and suicide are the two types of deaths in the Jackson County jail that the ME's typically deal with. Since they are both employed by the Jackson County Sheriff Department they will call an outside agency and often times a Medford Police detective will be present in order to show transparency in the organization.</p> <p>Judge Mejia wanted to know who signs off on the cause of death when a deceased person had a primary care physician but they had not seen them in a long time. Det. Pike said that he may talk to the physician and if the doctor said they have not seen the patient in a year the JCME's Office would take the case. However, if there are circumstance that point to the cause of death for instance being a cardiac event then the doctor might sign off on the cause of death, if they refuse to the JCME's Office will then take the case. It will be up to Dr. Olson to decide if he wants to perform an autopsy. For instance, if one of the ME's provide Dr. Olson with the deceased's cardiac history he may decide against an autopsy. Judge Mejia asked a follow up question about the death certificate. Det. Pike clarified that on a death certificate the cause and manner of death will be listed. Examples of cause of death could be gunshot wound to the head or blunt trauma due to single motor vehicle crash. The forensic pathologist has five choices to pick from for manner of death: natural, accidental, suicide, homicide, and undetermined. The forensic pathologist is</p>	

the only physician that can use all five manner of deaths. A private physician can only sign natural as a manner of death, because of this anything outside of a natural cause of death the JCME's Office needs to be involved.

Det. Pike displayed a map of the United States showing that there is no uniformity in regards to how each state deals with death investigation. It can range from county Medical Examiners only (4), statewide Medical Examiner (16 and DC), District Medical Examiner (1), only coroner Offices (11), and a mixture of Medical Examiners and coroner Offices (18).

As an ME Det. Pike and his colleague are appointed by the District Attorney and are responsible for: fielding death calls, scene investigation, external body examination, drawing toxicology samples, descendent identification/notification, bridge between police/family, and assist at autopsy/repair/clean up.

John Stromberg asked if Det. Pike has to appear in court often. Det. Pike said that he goes to a Grand Jury more often than court, which frequently has to do with what the scene looked like. The DA will have Dr. Olson appear in court to testify about the deceased's injuries.

Mark Orndoff wanted to know why Jackson County's suicide rate is higher than the neighboring counties and Det. Pike does not know why this is.

In 2017 there were 2,464 deaths in Jackson County. 720 of those deaths were investigated by JCME's Office. 1,744 deaths are in-patient hospital (natural causes) — licensed care facility or Hospice. Of the 720 deaths investigated by JCME's Office, 258 taken into JCME jurisdiction and the remainder (462) were signed off by the deceased primary care physician. Of the 258 that were taken into JCME jurisdiction: 93 deaths were due to natural causes, 97 deaths were due to accidents, 57 deaths were due to suicide, 10 were homicides, and 1 death was ruled undetermined. Deaths from a natural disease are the majority of deaths occurring every day in the United States. Whereas natural cause deaths make up the majority of cases investigated by Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices throughout the United States.

Doug Engle asked if the JCME's Office received a call for every one of the 2,464 deaths that occurred in 2017. Det. Pike clarified that the office was only called for the 720 cases that fit the criteria of them being notified.

John Stromberg wanted to know how many infant cases the JCME's Office receives. Det. Pike answered that on average it is four deaths a year and they are often due to co-sleeping. The JCME will get involved when a child dies at home unless there is very good documentation as to why an infant would have died; such as a documented abnormality. However, it is important to note that if the scene where the child died is concerning then they will get involved.

Mark Orndoff inquired about the Fatality Review Committee and what the review criteria was. Det. Pike said that it is 18 years and younger and cases that the JCME's Office take under their jurisdiction. Once the JCME returns to the office they will email the Advocacy Center so they are able to put it on the docket. Every three months the Committee will get together and talk about the deaths that occurred for individuals that were 18 years and younger. The Committee wants to know if there was anything in this child's death that was preventable; as a community was there anything that we can do.

The National average suicide rate is 12 per 100,000 people which would place Jackson County at 24 suicides a year. However, the average in Jackson County is approximately 45 a year. As of May 2018 Jackson County has already reached the 24 mark. When looking at suicides by month in Jackson County from 1990-2017 October has the highest rate and November has the lowest rate. The JCME's Office has partnered with Jackson County Suicide Prevention Coalition, HHS, and the Children's Advocacy Center to raise suicide awareness.

Jackson County's fatal heroin overdoses has been steadily increasing; 2015: 3, 2016: 4, 2017: 6, and in 2018 10 are suspected from heroin use. The suspected heroin overdoses in 2018 were within a three week period. The normal waiting period from the State Medical Examiner toxicology lab is 14 to 16 weeks so there has yet to be a confirmation if this cluster of overdoses is due to heroin. The JCME's Office has partnered with Jackson County HHS and Dr. Jim Shames to address this issue.

Jennifer Lind wanted to know whose responsibility it is to quickly identify trends. Det. Pike said it starts with the JCME's Office. Every year Dr. Shames looks at Jackson County's overdoses and has reached out to providers regarding the data.

Doug Engle asked what other types of drugs cause death by overdose. Det. Pike explained that methamphetamine overdoses are rare (one to two a year), but prescription medicine is a high number.

Judge Mejia inquired about how common it was for a person to die due to head trauma that was caused by drug impairment (e.g. falling down and hitting their head). Det. Pike said that it was fairly common especially in the transient community.

Jennifer Lind wanted to know how Det. Pike's field as a whole is held to the same standards to ensure that there is consistency about how deaths are determined so that trends could be meaningful. Det. Pike suggested there is a possibility there is more consistency within Jackson County with 2 examiners versus larger areas.

Beth Heckert asked if every case gets a toxicology test. Det. Pike said no. Beth had a follow-up question about a person in a car accident getting a toxicology test. Det. Pike said they will all receive one.

Dave Carter wanted to know what the proportion of toxicology results were showing heroin only versus heroin and fentanyl together. Det. Pike explained that a couple years back the JCME's Office had a couple overdoses that were fentanyl only, but since then they have yet to receive a report showing both heroin and fentanyl together. The toxicology reports for the 10 possible heroin overdoses are still with the State lab. The toxicology test will separate all of the drugs out that was in the deceased's system.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/OTHER BUSINESS

BOB KLEKER, CHAIR

DISCUSSION

There were no announcements.

Next Scheduled PSCC Meeting: June 26, 2018

Meeting Adjourned: 12:50 pm