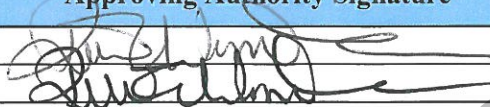



Policy Name:		Policy #:
Mission Statement		TOX-P1
North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner Toxicology Laboratory	Revision:	Revision Date/Initials:
Approving Authority Name	Approving Authority Signature	Approval Date
Ruth E. Winecker, Ph.D.		3/22/16
		1/11/17

Purpose:

To define the mission of the North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) Toxicology Laboratory.

Policy:

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) protects the health and safety of all North Carolinians and provides essential human services. The department is devoted to quality customer service. The OCME is a branch in the Epidemiology Section of the Division of Public Health. The OCME also functions as the Division of Forensic Pathology of the University of North Carolina (UNC) School of Medicine Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine.

Deaths in North Carolina that are sudden and unexpected, unattended, suspicious or the result of violence (homicides, suicides, and accidents) are investigated and certified by the State Medical Examiner System and represent approximately 14% of all North Carolina deaths yearly. The North Carolina Medical Examiner System is a network of approximately 450 medical doctors and other health professionals throughout North Carolina who devote their time, energy and medical expertise to see that deaths are adequately investigated. At the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), staff pathologists conduct external examinations for Durham and Wake Counties and perform medico-legal autopsies for 32 counties in central North Carolina. Cases are also referred to the OCME when regional pathologists are not available or when additional expertise is required to assess a case. As a result, more than one third of all autopsies in the Medical Examiner System are performed at OCME. Data collected on each death are recorded in the Medical Examiner Information System (MEIS). These data provide valuable surveillance and research tools to assess existing and potential public health threats and to influence policies that could lead to the prevention of premature death due to injury.

The Toxicology Laboratory serves all 100 counties of the North Carolina Medical Examiner System by providing forensic analytical testing of specimens and evidence from medical examiner cases. The laboratory is responsible for analytical testing, records maintenance and review of analytical testing for >10,000 medical examiner cases annually. The variety and scope of the testing performed by the laboratory is enormous, as methods need to be developed for any substance that a decedent may have ingested causing their death. The laboratory performs testing that runs from routine to highly complex as the scope of testing includes >600 compounds.

Finally, the methods used by the laboratory are neither standard nor developed by a certifying agency such as the EPA or FDA or commercial entity but are instead in-house developed and validated.

Procedures and/or Forms:

None

Uncontrolled Copy