



SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

David J Leffin
County Medical Examiner

February 1, 2018

County Administrator, Adam Payne
Honorable Members of the County Board

I am pleased to submit the 2017 Annual Report for the Medical Examiner's Office.

During 2017 we made improvements to the ZOHO Program which is an electronic records filing system with cremation photo storage capabilities. Improvements were made to both the death investigation and cremation investigation sections. This enables us the ability to store and retrieve records to create reports and send accurate information to finance for billing which saves time for both departments. We now have the ability to store photos on the county servers which provides all staff access to photos in a secure manner. This project would not have been possible without the assistance of the Information Technology Department.

All staff members were able to attend the Wisconsin Coroner's & Medical Examiner's Association annual meeting which was held in Sheboygan County this past year. Major cost savings were realized due to the proximity of the meeting.

The autopsy portion of our budget was again projected to be over budget due to drug-related deaths. For this reason, a rescue request for \$15,000 was approved. In addition, we received unexpected revenue from multiple sources totaling \$12,057. This allowed for a positive variance of \$8,399 at year end.

Respectfully,

David J Leffin

Mission Statement & Summary of Responsibilities

It is the mission of the Sheboygan County Medical Examiner's Office to provide professional death investigation into the deaths reportable to the Sheboygan County Medical Examiner's Office as it is applicable to the Wisconsin State Statutes and make a determination into the cause and manner of death.

The Medical Examiner's office investigates deaths in Sheboygan County that are reportable under Wisconsin Statutes 30.67, 346.71, 350, 155, 979.01 & 979.025. Some reasons for a Medical Examiner's investigation would include all homicides, suicides, deaths following an accident or injury, deaths due to poisoning, deaths following abortion, deaths involving a motor vehicle, snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle or boat, deaths with no physician in attendance in the past thirty days, deaths of a correctional inmate, deaths when after a reasonable time a physician cannot or will not sign the death certificate or in an emergency situation, deaths with unexplained, unusual or suspicious circumstances (including sudden unexplained death at any age), and deaths reportable under individual County Coroner/Medical Examiner policies.

The investigation process includes but is not limited to visual & physical examination of the deceased and the surroundings, the pronouncement or confirmation of the death of an individual, establishing the date and time of death, review of medication present and usage, review of medical history, identifying any recent changes in health or physical conditions, and obtaining information by speaking with family members, nursing staff and physicians, as well as neighbors, witnesses or law enforcement.

In deaths where law enforcement is involved, it is a collaborative effort of sharing investigation findings and knowledge. In some death investigations, more information is needed before a cause and manner of death can be made. An autopsy may be done and toxicology studies may be required to determine what kind and how much of certain medication is present in a person's system. X-rays may be taken to determine if there are broken bones or if any foreign objects are present and the location. There are other tests available for specific inquiries.

Goals & Objectives Achieved in 2017

One of our department's main goals in 2017 was to identify alternative funding for training for Medical Examiner staff. The goal was not met because the plan to utilize money from tissue donation is a violation of County by-laws. No other funding was allocated to support that initiative.

Another goal is to take a proactive approach with tissue donation request to stimulate the donations. The State mandates hospitals to ask families of those that die in the emergency departments if the decedent wanted to be a tissue donor. We also compassionately ask families of those that meet the criteria, if their loved one would have wanted to be a tissue donor, and then refer them to RTI. Tissue donation has provided great comfort and a feeling of giving, satisfaction, and closure.

In 2017 this program provided six families the opportunity to honor their loved ones by their gift of tissue donation. These gifts are used for valuable research and learning for future procedures and treatments. The county received \$3,200 in reimbursement from RTI Services in 2017.

Budget

The autopsy portion of our budget was again projected to be over budget due to drug-related deaths. For this reason, a rescue request for \$15,000 was approved. In addition, we received unexpected revenue from other sources totaling \$12,057. This allowed for a positive variance of \$8,399 at year end.

Autopsies contributed to higher than expected expenses. There were 6 more autopsies done than budgeted, totaling 28. Wages were also higher than expected which is attributed to the type of deaths this past year, specifically homicides and the drug related cases requiring increased hours of investigation. The cost of client services increased significantly because of indigent or other county assist cases.

Concerns

My concern continues to be the status of the Coroner and Medical Examiner mandatory training program and accreditation. I feel strongly that there is a need for standardized training, set procedures, and best practice guidelines. However, the State Legislature does not seem to share this concern about mandatory training. I will continue to look for training opportunities for my staff and encourage their involvement in our organization's training opportunities.

Goals For 2018

One of our goals for next year is to explore the effects of Dr. Doug Kelly leaving Fond du Lac Medical Examiner's office will have. We are concerned about what other counties previously contracted his services, where will those counties go for autopsy service, and if it will lead to any counties contracting with a Forensic Medical Examiner group. We will also explore what the current proportion of medical examiners versus coroners is in Wisconsin, how many counties have formed a merger, and how many counties have a Forensic Pathologist as their medical examiner.

Another goal is to continue with offering the opportunity for tissue donation when all the right qualifiers are present.

Finally, training opportunities will be researched to find adequate and relevant training materials and opportunities.