

CORONER DIVISION POLICY MANUAL



ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

The men and women of the Orange County Sheriff's Department are dedicated to the protection of all we serve. We provide exceptional law enforcement services free from prejudice or favor, with leadership, integrity, and respect.

ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT CORE VALUES

Integrity without compromise;

Service above self;

Professionalism in the performance of duty;

Vigilance in safeguarding our community.

CORONER MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Orange County Coroner Division is to serve the citizens and visitors of Orange County by conducting thorough medicolegal death investigations with compassion and specialized expertise.

CORONER DIVISION POLICY MANUAL - Introduction

The Coroner Division Policy Manual (CDPM) has been prepared and published for the Orange County Sheriff's Department. The CDPM is intended to provide all sworn, non-sworn, and professional staff members in the Coroner Division with current applicable rules and regulations. It is not intended to be used as a substitute for training requirements, nor does it relieve any member from the responsibility of seeking answers to questions from an authoritative source. It is incumbent upon each member of the Coroner Division to keep abreast of all changes in the laws, departmental regulations, and procedures.

Disclosure of the material contained in this manual may compromise facility security, impede medicolegal death investigations, and place personnel in danger. Therefore the contents of this manual are not to be released to any member of the public or outside agency without authorization from the Field Operations and Investigative Services Command.

PROCEDURE TO CHANGE/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No changes will be made to the Coroner Division Operations Manual without prior approval of the Field Operations Investigative Services Assistant Sheriff, Commander of the Investigative Services Command, or the Coroner Division Commander (Captain). No change will be made that is inconsistent with Department policy or with other sections of this manual.

All sworn and professional personnel that are assigned to the Coroner Division are responsible for reading and obtaining necessary clarification of this Division's policies. After reading and becoming familiar with each individual policy and/or the entire manual, each employee is responsible for acknowledging acceptance of those policies by signing the provided member acknowledgement form and returning that form to his/her assigned supervisor.

The Coroner Division Commander will inform all employees of new policies and of policy revisions by means of a "Policy Manual Updates" memo forwarded by email. Those new and/or revised policies become current and effective the date that the memo is released. It is each employee's responsibility to become familiar with all policy changes within the Coroner Division Policy Manual by signing the provided member acknowledgement form and returning that form to his/her assigned supervisor.

FUNCTION OF CORONER DIVISION UNITS

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT

The Administration Unit is comprised of a Captain, Assistant Chief Deputy Coroner, and Manager of Investigations. Together, they provide direction and managerial support for the Coroner Division. Members of the Support Staff perform the unique technical and specialized functions that are essential for successful daily operations.

CLERICAL UNIT

The **Clerical Unit** is comprised of office personnel with the primary responsibility of maintaining and managing all aspects of Coroner records. They perform data entry into the Coroner's CME program and are responsible for quality control on all the data entered into the system by other units. They respond to public record act requests; log and track incoming and outgoing information; collect fees for reports; transcribe all autopsy, microscopic and neuropathic reports; manage subpoenas for the coroner staff; field phone calls; and interface with grieving family members and visitors at the front counter.

INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

The Investigations Unit is responsible for carrying out the statutory duties of the Coroner as defined in California Government Code Section 27491 and Health and Safety Code Section 102850. Those duties include investigation into the circumstances surrounding all deaths falling within the Coroner's jurisdiction for the purpose of determining the identity of the deceased, the medical cause of death, the manner of death, and the date and time of death. Medicolegal death investigations are conducted countywide on all homicides, suicides, accidents, suspicious, and unexplained deaths. Other duties include locating and notifying the legal next of kin, safeguarding personal property, collection and preservation of evidence, and completion of mandatory records and documents. Deputy Coroners are P.O.S.T. certified sworn peace officers under Penal Code 830.35(c) whose authority extends to any place in the state for the purpose of performing their primary duty under Section 27469 and 274971 to 27491.4.

FORENSIC UNIT

The Forensic Unit is comprised of Forensic Assistants with primary responsibility for assisting the Forensic Pathologists with autopsy examinations; scheduling and assisting outside neuropathologists, odontologists and anthropologists; collecting, chronicling, and maintain all autopsy-related evidentiary specimens; processing the decedents into and out of the Coroner facility; and providing training opportunities for medical residents/students and mortuary science students: On a daily basis, the Forensics Unit works in coordinated effort with any and all county law enforcement agencies, local and state health departments, funeral homes, organ and tissue procurement agencies, and California DOJ as needed. Forensic Pathology Services are provided by Juguilon Medical Corporation. The staff is comprised of four Board Certified Forensic Pathologists and is managed by Chief Forensic Pathologist Anthony A. Juguilon.

TRAINING UNIT

The Coroner Facility houses the California Coroner Training Center, the sole educational institution in the State designated specifically for the specialized training needs of Coroners. The Division provides all of the POST mandated medicolegal death investigation training for California Coroners and Medical Examiners. The Division is also proactive in the community, participating in awareness programs geared toward preventing drunk driving and drug use; domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse; and reporting consumer products that cause fatal injury. The Division provides educational services for medical, legal and law enforcement professionals, collaborates with research organizations pursuing

medical science advancements and maintains collaborative relationships with non-profit organ and tissue procurement agencies to enhance the quality of life and save lives.

**CORONER DIVISION
ORGANIZATION CHART**

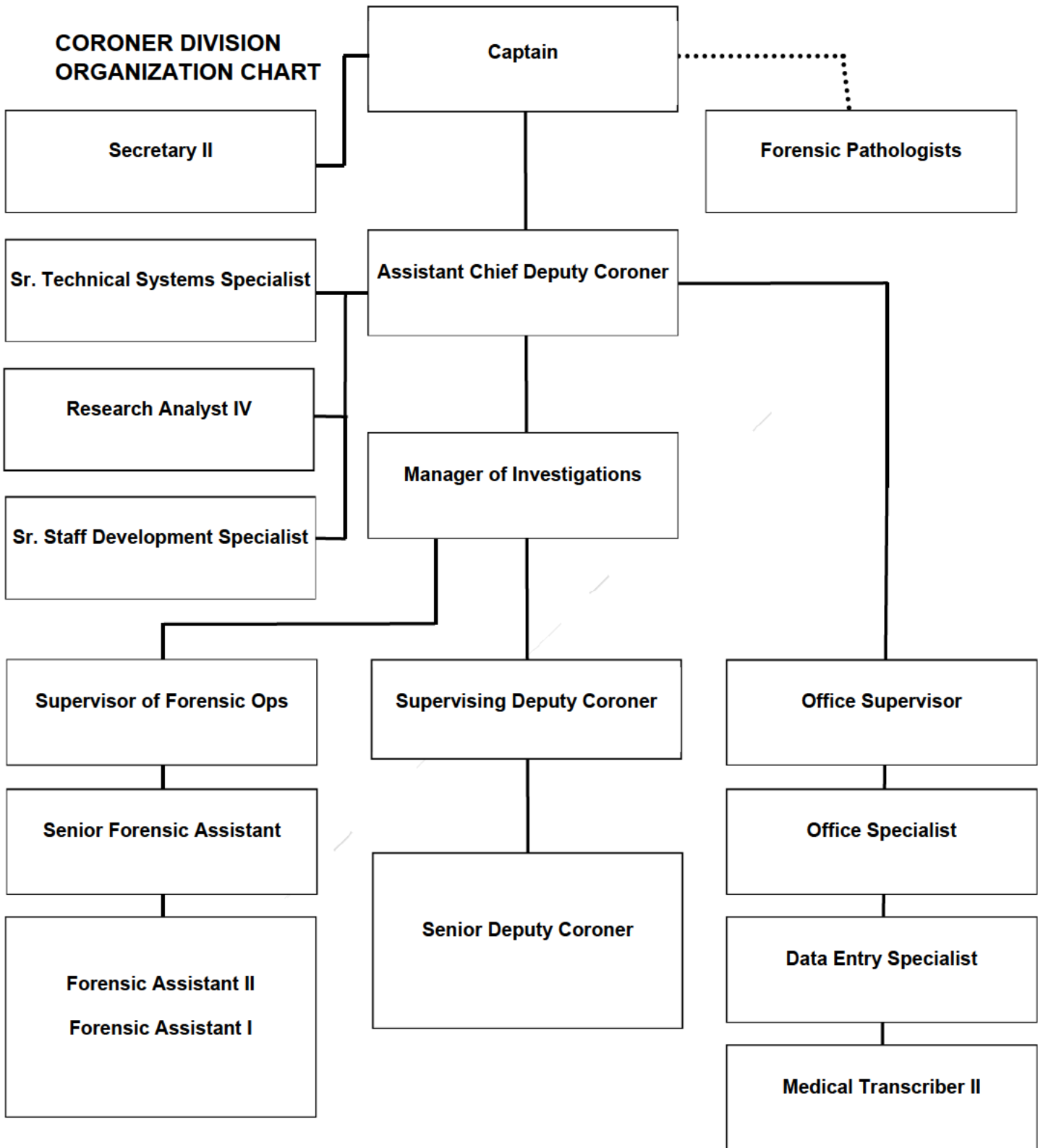


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EVIDENCE

1100.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy serves to establish rules and guidelines pertaining to any evidence collected by members of the Coroner Division in the course of a death investigation.

1100.2 DEFINITION

Evidence is defined as any item that has or may have bearing on the cause, manner, or circumstances surrounding the death, identity of the decedent, or can be used to prove the existence or non-existence of a fact.

- A) Evidence that a Deputy Coroner may commonly take into custody in the course of a death investigation may include, but is not limited to, firearms, other weapons, suicide notes, clothing, ligatures, ante-mortem specimens, prescribed medication, and illicit drugs or related paraphernalia.

1100.3 SEARCH

In the course of a field death investigation, the Deputy Coroner shall be responsible for searching for and identifying pertinent evidence.

- A) The Deputy Coroner shall conduct a thorough search of the decedent and death location in order to locate pertinent evidence, with consideration to applicable 4th amendment requirements.
 - a. The Deputy Coroner may also be required to search any relevant incident location(s) related to the death in order to locate evidence, with consideration to applicable 4th amendment requirements.
- B) The Deputy Coroner shall be responsible for determining the existence of and retrieving any significant ante-mortem specimens from hospitals, laboratories, or other pertinent medical facilities.
 - 1. Ante-mortem specimens may include, but are not limited to, blood, urine, or placenta.

1100.4 PHOTOGRAPHING EVIDENCE

The Deputy Coroner shall photograph pertinent evidence in its original location prior to collecting the item. Photographs shall be taken in accordance with Policy 1132 of this manual.

1100.5 COLLECTION

Evidence as defined in 1100.2 shall be collected by the Deputy Coroner as part of the death investigation.

1100.5.1 USING THE ORANGE COUNTY CRIME LAB FOR EVIDENCE COLLECTION

Evidence relating to a death where there is potential for criminal charges should be collected by members of the Orange County Crime Lab or the investigating law enforcement agency. If members of the Orange

County Crime Lab or law enforcement agency are not present or decline to collect evidence, the item(s) shall be collected by the Deputy Coroner.

The Deputy Coroner shall request the assistance of the Orange County Crime Lab, or the investigating law enforcement agency's Crime Scene Investigator, for evidence collection on non-criminal cases if he/she is unable to collect the evidence without compromising the integrity of the item.

1100.5.2 COLLECTION OF ILLICIT DRUGS AND MEDICATIONS

Illicit drugs and medications shall be collected by the Deputy Coroner if pertinent to identifying the deceased, or determining the circumstances, cause, or manner of death.

- A) If the item is such that it may contain fentanyl or other suspected toxic material/narcotics, and is packaged or in a closed container, the item shall be collected in accordance with Field Operations Manual section 19.V.C.3.
 - 1. Possible fentanyl or other suspected toxic materials/narcotics that are loose or otherwise unpackaged shall only be collected following notification to, and consultation with, a member of the Orange County Clandestine Lab Emergency Action Network (OCCLEAN).
 - a. The suspected type of toxic material and case circumstances will determine whether OCCLEAN responds to the scene or authorizes the Deputy Coroner to collect the material.
- B) Illicit drugs and medications with no investigative value, but representing a public safety hazard, shall be collected by the law enforcement agency or Deputy Coroner, with preference to the law enforcement agency.
 - 1. Examples of drugs and medications that may constitute a public safety hazard include, but are not limited to, any illicit substance, narcotic medications, or suspected toxic materials.
 - 2. Possible fentanyl or other suspected toxic materials/narcotics that are loose or otherwise unpackaged shall only be collected following notification to and consultation with a member of the Orange County Clandestine Lab Emergency Action Network (OCCLEAN).
 - a. The suspected type of toxic material and case circumstances will determine whether OCCLEAN responds to the scene or authorizes the Deputy Coroner to collect the material.
- C) Prescription medications with no investigative value and that do not pose a public safety hazard need not be collected.

1100.5.3 COLLECTION OF WEAPONS

Weapons shall be collected by the Deputy Coroner if pertinent to identifying the decedent or determining the circumstances, cause, or manner of death.

- A) The Deputy Coroner shall make every effort to render a weapon safe prior to collection.
 - 1. If the Deputy Coroner is unable to make a weapon safe, the Watch Commander shall be notified and the weapon shall be [REDACTED]
- B) If the Deputy Coroner becomes aware of any weapon(s) on scene that are unrelated to the death investigation, the Deputy Coroner shall inform a member of the investigating law enforcement agency of the presence of said weapon(s). The weapon(s) may be collected for safekeeping by the patrol officer, detective, etc., at the discretion of the investigating law enforcement agency.

1100.6 PRESERVATION

All evidence shall be preserved in accordance with Field Operations Manual Section 19.V.E.

1100.7 PACKAGING

All evidence shall be packaged in accordance with Field Operations Manual Section 19.V.F.

1100.8 CHAIN OF CUSTODY

Once evidence is collected, the Deputy Coroner shall retain physical control over the item(s) until all item(s) are booked in an evidence locker. All evidence shall be booked and secured in an authorized locker by the end of shift. Placing items in an employee locker, in your personal vehicle, or other location for temporary storage is strictly prohibited. Under extenuating circumstances, a supervisor may authorize temporary storage in an authorized secure area (example: locked office safe, closet, or file cabinet) if that area is only accessible by the deputy or supervisor. This will maintain chain of custody.

- A) For the purposes of drying prior to packaging, temporary storage of wet or soiled evidence items is permitted only in the designated drying closet or drawers. The item shall be packaged, booked, and secured in an authorized evidence locker as soon as possible once drying is complete.

1100.9 TAGGING AND BOOKING

All evidence shall be tagged and booked at the Coroner Division Facility or approved Department collection site, in accordance with Field Operations Manual Section 44.

- A) [REDACTED]

1100.10 DOCUMENTATION

Any evidence collected by the Deputy Coroner shall be documented in the CME database on the page titled "Property Intake" and shall include, at a minimum, the following:

- A) The item(s) collected. Whenever possible, include a full description of the item collected, including color, complete name, model and serial numbers, etc.
- B) The date and time collected.
- C) Location where the item was found.

1100.11 RE-EXAMINATION OF EVIDENCE

Deputy Coroners shall make every effort to examine and collect necessary information from evidence prior to booking. If a Deputy Coroner needs to re-examine a piece of evidence for any reason after booking, he/she shall contact the Orange County Sheriff's Department Property and Evidence Division to request temporary release of the item using the appropriate Property Tracking System release form. Once the re-examination is completed, the Deputy Coroner shall re-seal the item and return it to the Coroner Division Facility evidence room lockers, or other approved Department collection site, prior to the end of shift.

1100.12 DISPOSITION OF EVIDENCE

The Deputy Coroner shall be responsible for determining evidence disposition at the time of case closure or thereafter. The Deputy Coroner shall designate the disposition by completing the appropriate "Property Tracking System – Property Disposition Authorization" form and promptly return the form to the Orange

County Sheriff's Department Property and Evidence Division. If the Deputy Coroner authorizes release of any evidence item, said release shall be facilitated by the Property and Evidence Division only.

IDENTIFICATION

1101.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Establishing a decedent's identification is a core duty of the Coroner established in Government Code 27491. The purpose of this policy is to provide rules and guidelines to members of the Coroner Division for establishing the identity of a decedent.

1101.2 PROMPT IDENTIFICATION

Accurate identification of a decedent shall be established at the onset of the death investigation or as soon as possible thereafter.

1101.3 METHODS OF IDENTIFICATION

Decedents falling under the jurisdiction of the Coroner Division shall be identified by one of the following means, each of which is explained more fully herein:

- A) Visual identification
- B) Fingerprint search or comparison
- C) Dental comparison
- D) DNA search or comparison
- E) Circumstantial evidence

1101.4 VISUAL IDENTIFICATION

Establishing the identity of a decedent by visual identification is permissible only when the facial features are not distorted by trauma, decomposition, thermal injury, or other factors that may change his or her appearance. Such visual identification may be performed by:

- A) Source of Information
 1. The source of information will preferably be the most immediate relative to the decedent available at the time of the Deputy Coroner's body examination.
 2. If an immediate relative is unavailable, the source of information must have had qualified knowledge of the decedent during life.
 - a. The responsibility to determine "qualified knowledge" lies with the Deputy Coroner.
 - b. When the source of information is a non-immediate relative, the relation to and length of association with the decedent shall be documented in the Coroner Investigator's written report.
 3. The source of information must view the decedent's face to confirm identification.
 - a. The viewing shall be performed in person at the death location, or via a clear facial photograph taken by the Deputy Coroner or Forensic Assistant and shown to a source of information at the Coroner Division Facility.

- i. The Deputy Coroner or Forensic Assistant shall make every effort to minimize the appearance of blood, injury, or other facial distortion prior to taking the photograph.
 - ii. The shown photograph shall be approved by the on-duty Watch Commander prior to the source of information's viewing.
- 4. Visual identification shall not be accepted from a source of information suffering from obvious intoxication, developmental delay, or other condition causing the Deputy Coroner to have reasonable doubt in his/her ability to make an accurate visual identification.

B) Photograph Identification

- 1. Identification via photograph comparison is permitted only by using an official government photo.
 - a. Authorized government photos include a state driver's license or identification card, passport, or immigration or military identification card.
 - b. Using any other photos (example: a minor's school identification card, a college identification card) for photograph identification shall be approved by the on duty Watch Commander.
- 2. Identification via photograph comparison shall be performed only by the Deputy Coroner performing the body examination.
 - a. The Deputy Coroner shall not delegate the duty of identifying the deceased via photograph comparison to a law enforcement officer or medical personnel.
 - b. A name obtained by law enforcement and/or medical personnel may be accepted as a tentative identification only, and shall be confirmed by the Deputy Coroner via some other method.
 - c. The Deputy Coroner shall personally examine the deceased and make the comparison to the photo identification. Under no circumstances will a Deputy Coroner rely on photographs of the deceased provided remotely (example: email, text message) by law enforcement or medical personnel as the basis to compare the photo identification.
- 3. If the Deputy Coroner has any level of uncertainty when performing a visual photograph comparison to establish a decedent's identity, he/she shall treat that decedent as an unidentified person until identification is confirmed by other means.

1101.5 FINGERPRINT IDENTIFICATION

All decedents processed at the Coroner Division Facility shall be fingerprinted by one of the following means:

- A) Live Scan
 - 1. Live Scan shall be the preferred method of fingerprinting whenever possible.
- B) Ink print
- C) Silicone (Mikrosil) cast
- D) Kinderprint

1101.5.1 EXCEPTIONS TO FINGERPRINT IDENTIFICATION

There are few exceptions to the requirement that all decedents processed at the Coroner Division facility shall be fingerprinted. These include:

- A) Bones and specimens
- B) Fetuses

- C) Children under age 7.
 - 1. In lieu of fingerprints, foot prints shall be taken on all children under age 7.
- D) Decedents with poor fingerprint detail due to trauma, thermal injury, or decomposition.
 - 1. The Forensic Assistant processing the decedent may use his/her discretion when evaluating a case for the presence of quality ridge detail.
 - 2. The Forensic Assistant shall notify the on-duty Watch Commander if he/she is unable to obtain fingerprints for any reason.

1101.5.2 SUBMISSION TO CAL-ID

All fingerprints shall be submitted to CAL-ID for search or comparison. This submission shall be performed electronically via Live Scan whenever possible; however ink, silicone casts, and kinder prints may be hand delivered to the CAL-ID Bureau, with the proper examination request form, as needed.

1101.6 DENTAL IDENTIFICATION

Dental comparison shall be performed on all decedents not identifiable by visual, photograph, or fingerprint identification. The Deputy Coroner shall be responsible for locating and retrieving a decedent's antemortem dental x-rays and submitting said dental x-rays to the Senior Forensic Assistant. The Senior Forensic Assistant or his/her designee shall take postmortem x-rays of the decedent and arrange for dental comparison by the contracted Forensic Odontologist.

1101.7 MEDICAL APPLIANCE IDENTIFICATION

Identification via medical appliance comparison may be performed on all decedents who possess a serialized medical implant, and are not identifiable by other methods outlined in this policy. The Deputy Coroner shall be responsible for locating and retrieving a decedent's ante-mortem x-rays and other medical records, and submitting said records to the Senior Forensic Assistant. The Forensic Assistant shall take x-rays of the decedent and/or remove the appliance to arrange for comparison by the on-duty Watch Commander. The Watch Commander may enlist the assistance of the contract pathologist as he/she deems necessary.

1101.8 DNA IDENTIFICATION

DNA search or comparison shall be performed on all decedents not identifiable by visual, photograph, fingerprint, or dental identification. The Deputy Coroner shall be responsible for obtaining a comparison sample, when available, and submitting the sample along with required paperwork to either the Department of Justice or Orange County Crime Lab. The Forensic Assistant shall be responsible for obtaining sample(s) from the decedent and submitting to the proper agency for DNA search or comparison.

1101.9 CIRCUMSTANTIAL IDENTIFICATION

On rare occasions, and when efforts to identify a decedent by other means are either not possible or have yielded inconclusive results, circumstantial identification may be employed. The Coroner Division Commander or his/her designee shall approve any identification made by circumstances alone.

1101.10 DOCUMENTATION

The following information shall be documented in the CME database once positive identification is complete:

- A) The name of the person performing the identification
- B) The relationship of the identifying party to the decedent
- C) The method used to achieve the identification
- D) The date and time identification was complete

1101.11 UNACCEPTABLE IDENTIFICATION METHODS

The Deputy Coroner shall not accept a decedent's self-reported name as positive identification, without confirming the name by other acceptable methods as outlined in this policy.

PROPERTY

1102.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

California Government Code 27491.3 authorizes the Coroner to take custody and control of any and all personal effects, valuables, and property of the deceased at the scene of death, including real property, and safeguard them until lawful disposition can be made. The purpose of this policy is to establish rules and guidelines pertaining to the collection and safeguarding of personal property and/or real property by members of the Coroner Division. The Deputy Coroner shall take custody of, control, and safeguard property of a decedent as outlined herein. This policy is specific to property that is not otherwise evidence relevant to the death investigation.

1102.2 DEFINITION

Property is defined as any item of value on the decedent's person or found at the death location, and may include real property, if it is determined the decedent is the owner of the property.

- A) Property items collected by the Deputy Coroner may include, but are not limited to, jewelry items, wallets, cell phones, currency, keys, medical prosthetics, cosmetic devices, purses, tote bags, and occasional bulk items such as luggage, bicycles, or wheelchairs.
- B) Clothing items and internal medical or prosthetic devices are excluded.

1102.3 SEARCH

In the course of a death investigation, the Deputy Coroner shall be responsible for searching for and identifying a decedent's property, within the parameters of the 4th amendment.

- A) The Deputy Coroner shall conduct a thorough search of both the decedent and the death location in order to locate and identify property.
 - 1. All property items discovered on the decedent's person shall be removed and collected.
 - 2. Property items not on the decedent's person shall be collected when:
 - a. The item is needed to complete the death investigation.
 - b. The item is in danger of loss or damage and cannot be reasonably secured at the location of death.
 - 3. Perishable items (i.e. food items) may be discarded at the discretion of the Deputy Coroner.

1102.4 COLLECTION

Property items discovered at the death location shall be collected only by a Deputy Coroner, Supervising Deputy Coroner, or Reserve Deputy Coroner. Property items discovered upon intake to the Coroner Division Facility may be collected by the aforementioned personnel, or a Forensic Assistant/Senior Forensic Assistant.

1102.4.1 DIFFICULT REMOVAL OF PROPERTY FROM DECEDENT'S PERSON

When the Deputy Coroner is unable to remove an item of property from the decedent's person, the decedent and/or relevant body part (example: a ring unable to be removed from the finger) shall be sealed in a bag for transport to the Coroner Division Facility. The Deputy Coroner shall notify the intake personnel of the presence of property on the body, who, with the permission of the Deputy Coroner, may open the bag and attempt to collect the item.

- A) If the bag or seal is broken upon the decedent's arrival to the Coroner Division Facility, the intake personnel shall document the name of the transport driver and notify the Watch Commander immediately.
- B) If the property item is successfully removed and collected by the intake personnel, the sealed bag may be removed for the duration of the decedent's time at the Coroner Division Facility. The property item shall be combined with any other item(s) previously collected by the Deputy Coroner on scene.
- C) If intake personnel is also unable to remove the property item, the Deputy Coroner shall make every effort to secure the item to the body (example: with medical tape). The item shall be documented on a separate Property Inventory Form that shall be retained by Forensic staff.
 - 1. The item shall be released with the body and signed for by the mortuary representative at time of release.

1102.4.2 UNINTENDED DAMAGE OF PROPERTY

The Deputy Coroner shall make every effort to preserve the decedent's property during the collection process. If any item is unintentionally damaged during collection, the damaged item shall be documented on the Property Inventory Form.

1102.5 INVENTORY

All property collected by the Deputy Coroner or other authorized personnel shall be inventoried and itemized using the Coroner Division Property Inventory form. Property inventory shall take place at the death location and in the presence of a third party whose signature shall be requested on the Property Inventory Form under "Witnessed By."

- A) The third party may be a law enforcement officer, nurse or other medical staff, or other reliable witness.

1102.5.1 DIFFICULT INVENTORY, OR INVENTORY IN HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS

When the type or quantity of property items, or hazardous/environmental conditions on scene, create the potential for items to be lost, damaged, or miscounted if inventoried at the death location, all property items may be transported to the Coroner Division Facility for inventory in a controlled environment. The inventory shall be witnessed by the on-duty Watch Commander.

1102.6 TRANSPORTATION OF PROPERTY

At no time will property items be left unsecured by the Deputy Coroner while in transit from the death location to the Coroner Division Facility.

1102.7 PACKAGING OF PROPERTY

The Deputy Coroner shall package the decedent's property with the utmost respect and care for the item(s). The Deputy Coroner shall ensure that all items are cleaned if soiled, bloodied, or otherwise

tainted, prior to packaging. The property item(s) shall be enclosed in a plastic bag or coin envelope, then placed in a brown paper bag. The Property Inventory form shall be attached to the property bag until all property items are released.

1102. 8 PROPERTY STORAGE

Packaged property shall be stored in the Investigations property cage at the Coroner Division Facility.

1102.8.1 STORAGE OF BULK ITEMS

Bulk property items that will not fit into a provided paper bag may be placed on the floor of the property cage with the Property Inventory form attached. Bulk property items that will not fit into the property cage shall be transported directly to the Orange County Sheriff's Department Property and Evidence Division and booked for safekeeping.

1102.9 DOCUMENTATION OF STORAGE LOCATION

All property bags placed into or removed from the Investigations property cage at the Coroner Division Facility shall be tracked using the designated property log book.

1102.10 LONG TERM STORAGE

Property items, except U.S. currency, remaining unclaimed at the Coroner Division Facility for a period of 14 days shall be transferred to the Orange County Sheriff's Department Property and Evidence Division for safekeeping. U.S. currency remaining unclaimed for a period of 14 days shall be transferred to the Orange County Sheriff's Department Financial Division.

- A) Written authorization from next-of-kin is not required when transferring the item(s) to the Orange County Sheriff's Department Property and Evidence Division.
- B) Property may remain in storage at the Coroner Division Facility longer than 14 days if the Deputy Coroner chooses to give consideration to the legal next-of-kin due to special circumstances.
 - 1. Special circumstances may include the need to travel from out-of-state, elderly next-of-kin, etc.
- C) Property may also remain in storage at the Coroner Division Facility longer than 14 days if the body remains in house or the case is being handled by the Public Administrator.

1102.11 RELEASE OF PROPERTY

Property may be released by a Deputy Coroner, Supervising Deputy Coroner, Reserve Deputy Coroner, Investigative Assistant, or Office Specialist to the decedent's legal next-of-kin as defined by Health and Safety Code 7100, or any person designated by them in writing.

- A) A decedent's next-of-kin may transfer his/her authority for property to any other party by sending a written authorization to the Coroner Division Facility. This authorization shall clearly state their wish to release property to the new intended recipient, the transferring party's signature, and date.

1102.11.1 RELEASE OF PROPERTY WITHOUT WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION

Property may be released to any of the following parties without written authorization from the decedent's next-of-kin:

- A) The investigating law enforcement agency
- B) The Orange County Public Administrator
- C) Authorized representatives of the armed forces, when the decedent was an active duty military member

1102.11.2 NEXT-OF-KIN PROPERTY DISPUTE

When there is a known dispute amongst a decedent's next-of-kin concerning the release of property, and it appears, based on the facts known to the Coroner, all parties have equal lawful right to the items, all property shall be held at the Coroner Division Facility and/or Orange County Sheriff's Department Property and Evidence Division until a resolution is determined either by a court of law, the Orange County Public Administrator, County Counsel, or the Coroner Division Commander.

1102.12 PROPERTY COLLECTED AT THE CORONER DIVISION FACILITY

Previously undocumented property that is discovered on the decedent's person at the Coroner Division Facility shall be collected and packaged by the intake personnel. The intake personnel shall then notify the on-duty Watch Commander, and hand-deliver the item to the Investigations Unit or place the item in the Forensic Property Evidence Room. The item shall then be retrieved and processed per protocol by the on-duty Watch Commander or his/her designee.

1102.13 LOSS OF PROPERTY

If any member of the Coroner Division discovers that a property item has been misplaced or lost, the on-duty Watch Commander shall be notified immediately.

1102.14 FOUND PROPERTY

When a Deputy Coroner has discovered property in the decedent's possession that clearly belongs to another party (example: credit cards or driver's license in another's name), that item shall be booked at the Coroner Division Facility, or any other authorized Department collection site, as found property.

NEXT-OF-KIN

1103.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Notifying a decedent's legal next-of-kin of the death is a core duty of the Coroner set forth by Government Code 27491. This policy serves to establish rules and guidelines for the Deputy Coroner in the performance of next-of-kin searches, notifications, and making determinations as to legal status.

1103.2 PROMPT NOTIFICATIONS

Following a positive identification, the Deputy Coroner's efforts to locate and notify a decedent's next-of-kin shall begin immediately.

- A) When investigating the death of an unidentified person where a tentative identification is available, next-of-kin may be notified if they are needed to assist the Deputy Coroner by providing information that may lead to positive identification.
 - 1. Examples include providing the Deputy Coroner with dental x-rays or DNA samples.
 - 2. In these cases the Deputy Coroner shall inform next-of-kin that identification is not yet confirmed.

1103.3 NEXT OF KIN SEARCH

When a decedent's next-of-kin is not immediately known, the Deputy Coroner shall initiate a search for that next-of-kin using any and all available resources. The Deputy Coroner shall document his/her efforts in the Coroner Investigator's written report. When all possible leads have been exhausted and next-of-kin remains unknown, the Deputy Coroner shall refer the case to the Orange County Public Administrator.

1103.4 NOTIFICATION APPROACHES

Death notifications shall be performed in-person whenever case circumstances permit. If the apparent next-of-kin resides outside of Orange County jurisdiction, the Deputy Coroner shall contact the local law enforcement agency or Coroner/Medical Examiner to request assistance with an in-person death notification. If the Deputy Coroner determines that the need for an expeditious notification outweighs the need for an in-person delivery, or if the in-person notification attempt was unsuccessful, notification may be performed via telephone.

1103.4.1 CONTACTING NEXT-OF-KIN VIA MAIL OR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Occasionally, both in-person and telephone notification attempts are unsuccessful. In cases where both methods have been attempted, and the Deputy Coroner identifies an opportunity to contact the next-of-kin by mail or electronic communication, the Deputy Coroner may send the Coroner Division's approved message to the intended party, directing him/her to contact the Coroner Division reference the decedent.

1103.5 IN-PERSON DEATH NOTIFICATIONS

The Deputy Coroner shall request the assistance of a law enforcement officer or second Deputy Coroner when performing an in-person notification. The Deputy Coroner shall also notify the on-duty Coroner

Watch Commander and local law enforcement agency dispatch of their location and intent to make a death notification.

1103.6 ESTABLISHING NEXT-OF-KIN STATUS

Following the initial notification to potential next-of-kin, the Deputy Coroner shall query their relationship to the decedent in order to establish their legal authority. Kin status shall be decided pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 7100.

- A) A search for next-of-kin must continue until the highest priority surviving relative is located and notified.

FIELD RESPONSES

1104.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

California Government Code 27491 specifies all deaths requiring an inquiry by the Coroner. California Government Code 27491.2 authorizes, but does not require, the Coroner to render a field response where the death falls within the Coroner's jurisdiction. The purpose of this policy is to establish those deaths where the inquiry shall include a field response by the assigned Deputy Coroner.

1104.1.1 DEFINITION

A field response is defined as an in-person response by the Deputy Coroner to the death location, and/or any related incident location, to conduct a death investigation.

- A) All field responses to locations other than the death scene shall be made within the parameters of the 4th amendment.

1104.2 DEATHS REQUIRING A FIELD RESPONSE

The following deaths shall require a field response by the assigned Deputy Coroner:

- A) All known or suspected homicide deaths.
 - 1. If the time from the initial injury to the time of death is significantly delayed, and the law enforcement agency declines to respond to the death location due to lack of forensic value, the Deputy Coroner may also waive his/her field response.
- B) All deaths occurring while in the custody of a law enforcement agency.
- C) All deaths when it is known or suspected that a peace officer was involved.
- D) All unnatural deaths occurring outside of medical facilities.
- E) Deaths that occur while in the emergency room under any of the following circumstances:
 - 1. When death is a result of an accident or injury of an acute nature.
 - 2. When an acute drowning is known or suspected as being related to the death.
 - 3. When acute asphyxiation, of a non-natural nature, is known or suspected.
 - 4. When acute drug or ethanol overdose is known or suspected.
 - 5. When the death is known or suspected as resulting from suicide.
- F) Natural deaths that occur outside of medical facilities when any of the following circumstances apply:
 - 1. When the death occurs outside of a private residence or temporary place of residence.
 - a. A temporary residence may include motel rooms, board and care homes, and other similar facilities.
 - 2. When the circumstances surrounding the death do not support a reasonable expectation of sudden death.
 - 3. When the reporting party suspects neglect or reports poor living conditions.
- G) All deaths suspected as being a result of SUIDS.
- H) All deaths that occur at the Fairview State Developmental Care Facility.
- I) All deaths of unidentified persons.

- J) Residential deaths where the decedent was unattended at the time of death.
 - 1. For purposes of this policy, unattended is defined as not having another party present in or about the residence at the time of death.
- K) Any other case under Coroner jurisdiction where the circumstances are such that prudent investigative practice would require any of the following actions by the deputy coroner:
 - 1. On-scene examination of the body
 - 2. Identification confirmation
 - 3. Evaluation of the scene
 - 4. In-person interview with witnesses
 - 5. Collection of evidence
 - 6. Collection of the decedent's personal effects or sealing of the residence

1104.3 EXCEPTIONS TO THE FIELD RESPONSE

Field responses to emergency room deaths as described in section 1104.2.E (emergency room deaths) may be waived at the discretion of the assigned Deputy Coroner when there is no investigative or forensic value to be gained from responding (for example: no law enforcement or witnesses present, no property or evidence to collect) and a body exam will be performed upon the decedent's arrival to the Coroner Division Facility. Field responses to deaths in category 1104.2.J.2 (unattended deaths) may also be waived at the discretion of the assigned Deputy Coroner if the time the decedent was left unattended is minimal, there are no other investigative factors necessitating a response, and there is strong evidence to show that the death is not unexpected (for example: the decedent is under the care of a doctor for significant medical history or chronic illness, and there are no other circumstances to suggest an unnatural death). Any other exceptions to this policy shall be approved by the on-duty Watch Commander and documented in the Coroner Investigator's written report.

1104.4 RESPONSE TIME

Deputy Coroners shall make every effort to respond to the death location as quickly as possible. Immediate response shall be made to any death on or near railroad tracks causing a delay in rail service, and other deaths in public view.

1104.5 DEATHS REQUIRING THE DEPUTY CORONER TO REMAIN ON SCENE UNTIL REMOVAL OF THE BODY

The Deputy Coroner shall remain on scene until body removal when investigating the following deaths:

- i. Deaths that occur while in custody of a law enforcement agency.
- ii. Deaths that occur at the hands of a peace officer.
- iii. Deaths resulting from homicide.
- iv. Deaths in public view.

This section does not apply when the decedent is in a hospital setting and being maintained on life support for the purposes of organ procurement.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS

1105.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy details the legal mandates and additional requirements of the Deputy Coroner and other Coroner Division members when investigating the death of an unidentified person.

1105.2 DEFINITION

An unidentified person is defined as any decedent whose identity is either unknown or has not yet been confirmed in conformity with Policy 1101 of this manual.

1105.3 TEMPORARY IDENTIFIER

All unidentified males shall be referred to and labeled as “John Doe” until he is positively identified. All unidentified females shall be referred to and labeled as “Jane Doe” until she is positively identified.

1105.3.1 DOE NUMBERS

Each decedent that remains unidentified beyond the assigned Deputy Coroner’s end-of-shift, shall also be identified using a sequential log number. This number shall be listed in the CME database as the middle name.

- A) Example: “John #18 Doe”

1105.4 INVESTIGATION

When investigating the death of an unidentified person, the Deputy Coroner shall make every effort to conduct a thorough investigation in attempt to locate any evidence that will assist with identification. This includes but is not limited to:

- A) Searching the decedent’s person, residence, vehicle, and any other surrounding area that may contain evidence such as identification cards, medical or dental records, vital documents, address books, letters, etc. This search shall be performed within the parameters of the 4th amendment.
- B) Interviewing witnesses for potential leads as to the decedent’s identity.
- C) Follow-up investigation as determined by case circumstances.
 - 1. Examples include contacting local law enforcement agencies for missing persons reports, or canvassing the death location and surrounding area.

1105.5 BODY EXAMINATION

In addition to performing the standard body examination, the Deputy Coroner shall search for and document and/or photograph, with a scale, the following:

- A) Gender
- B) Apparent race
- C) Estimated age

- D) Hair color
- E) Eye color
- F) Glasses
- G) Facial Hair
- H) Dentition
- I) Jewelry
- J) Scars
- K) Marks
- L) Tattoos
- M) Amputations
- N) Clothing
 - 1. Clothing description shall include color, size, and brand of each item.
- O) The location of the remains, with as many specific facts as possible.
- P) Observations pertinent to the estimation of the time of death
- Q) Any other unique or potentially significant detail regarding the decedent's physical features or appearance

1105.6 INITIAL FORENSIC PROCESSING

In addition to the standard body intake procedure(s), the Forensic Assistant shall be responsible for the following additional tasks when processing an unidentified person:

- A) Taking both frontal and lateral facial photographs, with scale.
- B) Taking fingerprints and palm prints via Live Scan, Kinderprint, and Mikrosil cast.
 - 1. Palm prints may be taken via Live Scan and Kinderprint only.
- C) Taking postmortem full body and dental x-rays.

1105.7 DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE NOTIFICATION

The Deputy Coroner shall report the death of any unidentified person to the Department of Justice (DOJ) for entry into the National Crime Information Center database. This notification shall be performed via Teletype transmittal within 10 calendar days from the date the body or remains were discovered.

1105.8 PRESS RELEASE

Within a reasonable amount of time and when case circumstances dictate, the Deputy Coroner shall draft a press release including a brief summary of the death circumstances, a description of the unidentified person, and contact information for the Coroner Division Facility. The Deputy Coroner shall submit the draft to the on-duty Watch Commander, who shall in turn finalize and submit to the Department's Public Information Center for dissemination to various media outlets as needed.

- A) For homicide deaths of unidentified persons, the Deputy Coroner shall obtain the approval of the investigating law enforcement agency prior to the dissemination of any press release.

1105.9 ARTIST'S SKETCH

Within a reasonable amount of time and when case circumstances dictate, the Deputy Coroner shall contact a Forensic Sketch Artist to arrange for completion of a sketch rendering of the decedent. The Deputy Coroner may elicit assistance from the Forensic Assistant to coordinate this process as necessary. Upon completion, the final sketch shall be forwarded to the on-duty Watch Commander for distribution to the Coroner Division website, the Department's Public Information Officer, and other personnel, agencies, or media outlets as needed.

1105.10 DENTAL EXAMINATION

The Forensic Assistant shall contact the contract Forensic Odontologist to arrange for dental examination of the decedent. The Forensic Assistant shall submit any dental x-rays, charting, and other reports to DOJ within 45 calendar days from the date the body or remains were discovered.

1105.11 ANTHROPOLOGY EXAMINATION

When case circumstances dictate, the Forensic Assistant shall contact the contract Forensic Anthropologist for examination of the remains.

1105.12 COLLECTION OF DNA SAMPLES

The Forensic Assistant shall collect DNA samples, including but not limited to tissue, hair, or body fluids, from any unidentified person and submit samples to DOJ within 90 days from the date the body or remains were discovered.

1105.13 FINAL REPORT

If the decedent remains unidentified after all tests and examinations have been completed, the Deputy Coroner shall prepare and submit a final report of investigation to DOJ within 180 days from the date the body or remains were discovered.

- A) This report shall include all available test results, examination reports, artist's sketches, and x-rays, along with the appropriate DOJ Unidentified Deceased Reporting Form

1105.14 FINAL DISPOSITION

If the decedent has yet to be identified 365 days from the date the body or remains were discovered, the Deputy Coroner may arrange for final disposition of the remains, with the assistance of Supervising Deputy Coroner in charge of indigent decedents. The Forensic Assistant shall extract the jaws (maxilla and mandilla, with teeth) prior to release of the remains for cremation or burial. Pursuant to Government Code 27521(f), the jaws shall be retained indefinitely, or one year after positive identification is made.

1105.15 CASE MANAGEMENT – LONG TERM UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS

If the decedent has yet to be identified 365 days from the date the body or remains were discovered, the Deputy Coroner may submit the case file to his/her Supervising Deputy Coroner for final review. The Supervising Deputy Coroner will transition the file for long-term maintenance.

1105.16 UPDATES TO DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE REPORT

If any test or examination described in this policy results in the discovery of new information about the unidentified decedent's description or demographics, the Deputy Coroner shall be responsible for informing DOJ by submitting an updated Teletype transmittal.

1105.17 NOTIFICATIONS WHEN AN UNIDENTIFIED PERSON IS IDENTIFIED

If/when an unidentified person is identified, the Deputy Coroner shall be responsible for making all appropriate notifications to the decedent's next-of-kin, Coroner Division personnel, local law enforcement agencies, CAL-ID, DOJ, and any other involved or interested entities.

1105.18 DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLETED TASKS

All Coroner Division Facility members shall be responsible for documenting their respective completed tasks via the "Doe Tracking Form" in CME.

REPORTABLE DEATHS

1106.1 POLICY

California Government code 27491 establishes the type(s) of deaths requiring an inquiry by the coroner. In accordance with and in addition to this code, the Deputy Coroner shall conduct a death investigation to determine the circumstances, cause, and manner of all reported deaths in any of the following categories:

- A) Deaths where the decedent was not under the regular care of a physician.
- B) Deaths where the decedent has not been treated by a physician or registered nurse, who is a member of a hospice interdisciplinary team, within 20 days prior to death.
- C) Deaths where the physician is unable to accurately state the cause of death.
- D) When homicide is known or suspected.
- E) When suicide is known or suspected.
- F) When the death is known or suspected to be in whole or in part the result of an accident or injury, either old or recent.
- G) When the death is known or suspected to be the result of a criminal act.
- H) When the death is following a known or suspected self-induced criminal abortion.
- I) When the death is associated with a known or alleged rape or crime against nature.
- J) When aspiration, starvation, exposure, drug addiction, acute alcoholism, or traumatic injury is the known or suspected cause.
- K) When the death is known or suspected to be a result of poisoning.
- L) When the death is the known or suspected result of occupational disease or hazards.
- M) When the death is known or suspected to be the result of a contagious disease.
- N) When the death occurred while in the custody of a law enforcement agency.
- O) When the decedent is an unidentified person.
- P) When the decedent is the patient of a state hospital serving the mentally or physically disabled.
- Q) When the death is the known or suspected result of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome.
- R) Fetal deaths where the decedent is 20 weeks gestation or more.
- S) Unattended deaths.

1106.2 DEATH CERTIFICATE SIGNATURES

The Coroner Division Commander or his/her designee shall sign the death certificate for all deaths listed in section 1106.1 of this policy, unless investigation determines that the death was of natural causes and the decedent's assigned physician is willing and able to state the cause of death.

LIVESCAN

1108.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

As stated in Policy 1101 – Identification, the preferred method of fingerprinting for all decedents received at the Coroner Division Facility is Livescan. This policy establishes the rules and guidelines for use of the Livescan system.

1108.2 INTAKE RESPONSIBILITIES

During intake processing at the Coroner Division Facility, the Forensic Assistant shall:

- A) Take fingerprints of all 10 digits using the Livescan system.
 - 1. If the decedent has fewer than 10 digits, fingerprints shall be taken of the remaining digits, with specific annotation made in Livescan regarding the missing digits (i.e. deformed, missing, etc.)
 - 2. If the quality of fingerprint detail is compromised due to condition of the remains, the Forensic Assistant may use his/her discretion to take fingerprints via an alternate method as detailed in Policy 1101.
- B) Electronically save and submit the fingerprints to CAL-ID for search.
- C) Print a copy of the completed 10-print card and upload a scanned version to the CME database.

1108.3 RETURN OF LIVELSCAN SEARCH RESULTS

The on-duty Watch Commander shall be responsible for reviewing and verifying all returned Livescan results. Results will print to the printer at the Watch Commander's work station, at which time the Watch Commander shall:

- A) Review and verify the four separate returns for possible hits. Returns will include:
 - 1. Orange County Number (OCN or "Local")
 - 2. California Department of Justice (DOJ)
 - 3. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
 - 4. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

1108.3.1 POSITIVE LIVELSCAN SEARCH RESULTS

If Livescan results return with a positive match, the Watch Commander shall search at least one of the returned record number(s) through CLETS to find the name associated with that record. If it is not possible to find the name via the CLETS database, the Watch Commander shall contact the returning agency directly to obtain the information.

- A) If the name and date of birth associated with the matched record is printed directly on the return by the returning agency, this requirement to verify does not apply.
- B) For already identified decedents, the Watch Commander shall confirm the identification by ensuring that the name and date of birth printed on the return and/or found via CLETS matches the information input in CME by the Deputy Coroner.

1. The Watch Commander shall also mark the appropriate fields in CME to show that identification was confirmed via Livescan.
- C) For unidentified decedents, the Watch Commander shall update CME to reflect the name and date of birth printed on the return and/or found via CLETS.
 1. The Watch Commander shall also update CME to reflect Method of ID as "Livescan."
 2. The Watch Commander may then assign any necessary follow-up investigation to the assigned Deputy Coroner or alternate deputy as needed.
- D) Upon completion of the identification confirmation, the Watch Commander shall initial and date the paper return(s) and give them to the assigned Deputy Coroner.

1108.3.2 NEGATIVE LIVESCAN SEARCH RESULTS

If the Livescan return indicates negative search results, the Watch Commander will review the Coroner Investigator (CI) report and/or consult the assigned Deputy Coroner to determine whether a positive return was anticipated based on case history and circumstances.

- A) For already identified decedents:
 1. If a positive return was anticipated but Livescan results are negative, the Watch Commander or his/her designee shall submit a CAL-ID request for manual comparison to the decedent's DMV record.
 2. If a positive return was not anticipated and Livescan results are negative, no further action is required.
- B) For unidentified decedents:
 1. If Livescan results are negative, the Watch Commander will document the search results and pursue identification via other means detailed in Policy 1105 – Unidentified Persons.
- C) The Watch Commander shall mark the appropriate fields in CME to show that identification was not confirmed via Livescan, then initial and date the paper return(s) before returning them to the assigned Deputy Coroner.

1108.4 LIVESCAN DISCREPANCIES

If a Livescan search returns a result that significantly differs from information previously obtained by the Deputy Coroner, the Watch Commander shall:

- A) Immediately make necessary corrections in CME.
- B) Immediately notify the Manager of Investigations and Assistant Chief Deputy Coroner via telephone.
- C) Assign any necessary follow-up investigation to the assigned Deputy Coroner or alternate deputy as needed.

1108.4.1 SPELLING OR MINOR VARIANCES

If the Livescan discrepancy appears to be only a spelling difference or minor variation, and all other demographic information matches that entered by the Deputy Coroner into CME, the Watch Commander shall inform the assigned Deputy Coroner of the name variance. The Deputy Coroner shall then compare the name spelling against other available sources in order to determine spelling accuracy. Changes or updates to CME will be made at the discretion of the Deputy Coroner.

CME

1109.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Documentation and tracking of accurate and complete information is vital to the performance of a thorough death investigation. The Coroner Division Facility accomplishes this tracking via the CME database, which contains a compilation of information input by members of all Division units. This policy establishes general guidelines and requirements for use of this database.

1109.2 GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

All members shall complete their respective sections of CME pages and fields, to document actions taken or information obtained on a given case. All members shall complete their respective sections of CME as soon as practical and prior to case closure. For CME data to qualify as an "official record," entries must be made "at or near the time" of the event referenced in the record. Any entry made into CME shall accurately reflect your actions in relation to the investigation (example: Do not make an entry that property was collected and booked into evidence, until it has actually occurred).

1109.2.1 LATE ENTRIES

Entries may be added following closure of the case for reasons including, but not limited to, specimen disposition, release of property and evidence, report request tracking, or subpoenas. These entries shall be made immediately at the time the action is taken.

1109.3 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

For any death requiring Coroner death certification, the assigned Deputy Coroner shall be responsible for completing, at a minimum, the following CME sections prior to the start of autopsy examination and/or Sign Out – No Autopsy (SONA) review:

- A) Possible Manner
- B) Decedent's Name and Date of Birth
- C) Date and Time of Death
- D) Identified By and Identification Method
- E) Marital Status
- F) Autopsy Code
- G) Billing Code
- H) Next-of-Kin name and contact information
- I) Location of Death
- J) Injury Date, Time, Location and Description (when applicable)
- K) Detailed Circumstances
- L) Property Collected
- M) Any Follow-Up Requests

SUICIDE NOTES

1110.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Pursuant to Government Code 27464, suicide notes are commonly collected by the Deputy Coroner as a supplement to the death investigation. This policy establishes guidelines for the collection, processing, and release of such notes.

1110.2 COLLECTION AND RETENTION

All suicide notes apparently written by the deceased, which may tend to indicate an intention by the writer to take the writer's life, shall be collected and booked as evidence in accordance with Coroner Division Policy 1100.

1110.2.1 COLLECTION OF HOLOGRAPHIC WILLS

Suicide notes that are testamentary in nature, giving directions for disposition of property or disposal of remains, shall be considered a holographic will and filed with the Superior Court of Orange County – Probate in lieu of being booked as evidence (a copy shall be retained in the Coroner file as noted below).

- A) If the holographic will is potentially evidence of a crime, the evidentiary processing of the original document shall take precedence over filing with the Superior Court of Orange County – Probate.
- B) If the holographic will is accompanied by a small property item (example: keys, currency), the Deputy Coroner shall book that property item for safekeeping until such time as the probate process is completed and lawful disposition is made.

1110.3 COPIES OF NOTES

Prior to booking of suicide notes, the Deputy Coroner shall make a copy of the original document to be retained in the case file. Additional copies of suicide notes may be released to the decedent's legal next-of-kin or the note's addressee, at any point in the investigation, at the discretion of the Deputy Coroner.

1110.4 DISPOSITION

Following case closure, disposition of original notes and documents shall be facilitated through the Orange County Sheriff's Department Property/Evidence Division. The assigned Deputy Coroner may authorize release of the note or document to either the decedent's next-of-kin or the note's addressee.

- A) If there are multiple suicide notes or multiple addressees on a single suicide note, the Deputy Coroner may authorize release of the note to the legal next-of-kin entitled to property, once this has been determined. At the discretion of the Deputy Coroner, the note may be released to the addressee instead of the legal next-of-kin, if the addressee's identity and location may be determined without significant investigation.

OUTSIDE AGENCY DEATH NOTIFICATIONS

1112.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

As a professional courtesy, the Coroner Division will occasionally assist outside agencies by performing in-person death notifications on their behalf. This policy provides instruction for the Deputy Coroner receiving the death notification request.

1112.2 REQUIRED INFORMATION

Outside agencies may submit their request for a death notification by a telephone call directly to the Coroner Investigations Unit. Upon receiving the request, the Deputy Coroner shall obtain the following information, which shall be recorded in the "New Case – Death Notification" page in CME:

- A) Requesting Party's name, agency, contact number, and case number
- B) Decedent's Name, date of birth, and date of death
- C) The method of identification
- D) Brief circumstances of death
- E) Name, relationship to decedent, address, and phone for the person to be notified

1112.3 CASE NUMBER PREFIX

After obtaining all required information, the Deputy Coroner shall generate a Death Notification case number, designated with the prefix "DN."

- A) Example: DN18-00010

1112.4 PERFORMING THE DEATH NOTIFICATION

The outside agency death notification shall be performed at the discretion of the on-duty Watch Commander, taking into consideration the circumstances of the death and current Coroner Division caseload and staffing. Any death notification performed on the behalf of an outside agency shall be performed in accordance with Policy Section 1103.4 of this manual.

1112.5 INFORMING OUTSIDE AGENCY OF OUTCOME

The Deputy Coroner performing the outside agency death notification shall be responsible for communicating results of that notification attempt back to the requesting party. If next-of-kin notification was successful, the Deputy Coroner shall provide the requesting party with a name, address, and contact number for the next-of-kin.

1112.6 DEATH NOTIFICATION REPORT

The Deputy Coroner shall complete the remaining applicable CME fields under the Death Notification case number and submit a finalized report to the on-duty Watch Commander for review and closure.

ASSIST OUTSIDE AGENCY

1113.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Occasionally, the Coroner Division receives a request from an outside agency or county to perform an autopsy examination, or other services for that entity. This policy establishes guidelines for the facilitation and documentation of such services.

1113.2 CASE NUMBER PREFIX

All casework performed on behalf of another agency or county shall be documented in CME under an "Assist Outside Agency" case number designated by the prefix "AOA."

- A) Example: AOA18-00002

1113.3 WATCH COMMANDER RESPONSIBILITY

All investigative casework performed on behalf of another agency or county shall be the responsibility of the on-duty Watch Commander receiving the initial request.

1113.4 PRE-APPROVED CONTRACTS

The on-duty Watch Commander is permitted to initiate an AOA case for agencies or counties that hold a pre-approved contract with the Orange County Sheriff's Department – Coroner Division. The provision of services to outside agencies or counties without an existing pre-approved contract shall first be approved by the Coroner Division Commander.

1113.5 AUTOPSIES FOR OUTSIDE AGENCIES

Any decedent whose death occurs outside of Orange County's jurisdiction, is to be transported to the Coroner Division Facility for the purpose of a postmortem examination, and shall be processed per the applicable Division policies and procedures, unless otherwise noted in this policy.

- A) It is the sole responsibility of the requesting agency to transport the remains to and from the Coroner Division Facility.
- B) Identification of the remains will be the responsibility of the outside agency.
 - 1. The remains will not be fingerprinted.
- C) All tissues, biological specimens, and x-rays shall remain in the custody of the Coroner Division Facility until a cause of death is determined and all analyses are complete.
 - 1. Once a cause of death is established and/or all analyses are complete, all specimens, tissues and x-rays shall be released to the outside agency.
- D) Copies of all paperwork shall be retained by the Coroner Division Facility. Original paperwork shall be given to the requesting agency.
- E) Remains shall not be embalmed.

AUTOPSY ATTENDANCE

1114.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Coroner Division regularly receives requests from outside parties seeking to attend an autopsy examination. This policy establishes guidelines for evaluating and approving such requests.

1114.2 REQUESTS FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

When requests to attend an autopsy are received from law enforcement personnel with an investigative interest in the death, the requests shall be granted by the Deputy Coroner without need for other approval. The Deputy Coroner shall inform the Forensics staff of the request by so indicating on the Facility History form. The Senior Forensic Assistant shall be responsible for facilitating the request by contacting the interested party or agency to inform them of the scheduled autopsy time.

- A) When requests to attend an autopsy are received from law enforcement personnel with no investigative interest in the death, the request shall be forwarded to the Coroner Division Commander for review and approval.
- B) When a law enforcement agency requests to use their own forensic personnel for photography or evidence processing during autopsy, the request shall be forwarded to the Coroner Division Commander for review and approval.

1114.3 REQUESTS FROM NON-LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

When requests to attend an autopsy are received from members of the public or other non-law enforcement personnel, the member receiving the request shall instruct the requestor to submit a request in writing to the Coroner Division Commander. The Coroner Division Commander will review and approve or deny the request. The request shall include:

- A) The requestor's name and contact information
- B) The requestor's occupation or field of interest
- C) A brief explanation of the reason or benefit of attending an autopsy

1114.3.1 APPROVED REQUESTS FROM NON-LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

Any autopsy attendance request from members of the public or other non-law enforcement personnel that is approved by the Coroner Division Commander shall be assigned to the Senior Forensic Assistant for coordination and scheduling.

PRIVATE AUTOPSY

1115.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Pursuant to Government Code 27520, the Coroner Division Facility shall perform a private autopsy when requested in writing by the decedent's next-of-kin. This policy establishes rules and guidelines for the processing and approval of requests for private autopsy examination.

1115.2 REQUEST PROCESS

All requests for a private autopsy examination shall be made in writing by the requestor and submitted to the on-duty Coroner Watch Commander. The Watch Commander shall determine whether the requestor has the legal authority to make the request.

- A) Government Code 27520 mandates:
1. The request shall be made by the decedent's surviving spouse.
 2. If there is no surviving spouse, the request shall be made by the decedent's surviving child or parent.
 3. If there is no surviving child or parent, the request shall be made by the decedent's legal next-of-kin.

If there is no surviving spouse, child, or parent, legal next-of-kin shall be determined in accordance with Health and Safety Code section 7100. If there is a dispute between next-of-kin with equal legal authority regarding performance of an autopsy, the Watch Commander shall forward the request to the Coroner Division Commander, or his/her designee, for review.

1115.3 REVIEW OF REQUEST

The Watch Commander shall review the content of the request to determine whether the case history or circumstances would cause the death to fall under Coroner jurisdiction. If the death *does* fall under Coroner jurisdiction and would require a postmortem examination pursuant to Division policy, the Watch Commander shall arrange for the examination at no cost to the requestor. If the death *does not* fall under Coroner jurisdiction, the Watch Commander shall arrange for the decedent to be transported to the Coroner Division Facility for private autopsy.

1115.4 FEES

The cost of the autopsy, additional testing, and any other related expenses shall be paid in full by the requestor, prior to transport of the decedent or start of autopsy examination. The fees shall be determined by the Orange County Sheriff's Department – Financial Division.

1115.5 DOCUMENTATION

All cases approved for private autopsy examination shall be recorded in the CME database. The assigned Deputy Coroner shall create a new Coroner case and complete all applicable CME data fields, with the option of "Private Autopsy" entered in the fields titled "Possible Manner" and "Final Manner." The field titled "Autopsy Code" shall be marked "Private." The assigned Deputy Coroner shall also prepare a Coroner Investigator report in accordance with Division policy and procedure.

1115.6 DEATH CERTIFICATE

Upon receipt of a request for private autopsy, the Watch Commander shall determine whether there is a primary physician willing and able to state a natural cause of death.

- A) The death certificate must be attested by the primary physician prior to commencement of a private autopsy.

1115.7 AUTOPSY PROCEDURES AND SAMPLE RETENTION

All decedents approved for private autopsy shall be transported, examined, and released by the Coroner Division in accordance with standard operating procedures. All tissues and specimens collected during the autopsy shall be retained and discarded in accordance with Coroner Division policy.

1115.7.1 ADDITIONAL TESTING

Following the initial autopsy examination, the Watch Commander shall consult with the pathologist in order to determine whether additional testing is required in order to determine the cause and manner of death.

- A) Additional testing may include a toxicology screen, microscopic examination, or neuropathological examination.

1115.8 CAUSE OF DEATH AND DEATH CERTIFICATE AMENDMENTS

If, at the conclusion of the autopsy and after all additional testing is completed, the Coroner pathologist determines the cause of death to be markedly different than the cause(s) of death previously attested by the primary physician, the Coroner may elect to amend the death certificate to reflect the updated cause of death.

If, at the conclusion of the autopsy and after all additional testing is completed, the Coroner pathologist determines the cause of death to be similar to that previously attested by the primary physician (i.e. natural causes), the death certificate shall remain unchanged.

1115.9 CORONER RECORDS

All Coroner records pertaining to private autopsy examinations shall be managed and released in accordance with Coroner Division policy.

RELIGIOUS OBJECTION TO AUTOPSY

1116.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

California Government Code section 27491.43 mandates that a Coroner shall not perform an autopsy or other procedure in any case in which the Coroner has received a certificate of religious belief executed by the decedent. This policy outlines the other legal requirements of the Coroner and processes of the Coroner Division when notified of the existence of, or presented with a copy of, a certificate of religious belief.

1116.2 INITIAL NOTIFICATION

When a decedent's friend or family member notifies any member of the Coroner Division of a potential religious objection to autopsy, the member shall immediately notify the on-duty Coroner Watch Commander. In accordance with Government Code 27491.43(a2), the Watch Commander shall not order an autopsy for a minimum of 48 hours or until the certificate is produced. The Watch Commander shall advise the reporting party that an autopsy will commence in 48 hours if no valid certificate is produced.

- A) The field marked "Autopsy Code" shall be marked as "Hold Post" for the duration of the 48 hour hold.
- B) In the event that the autopsy or other procedure has already commenced at the time of initial notification, the Watch Commander shall ensure that all procedures are stopped immediately.

1116.3 CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENTS

If the decedent's friend or family member produces a certificate of religious objection, the certificate shall be given directly to the on-duty Watch Commander who shall review and determine the certificate's validity. If the certificate is deemed valid, postmortem examination shall not be performed and the death certificate shall be signed in accordance with section 1116.7 of this policy. Per Government Code 27491.43(b), the certificate shall meet the following criteria in order to be considered valid:

- A) Be executed by the decedent, prior to death, at age 18 or older.
- B) The decedent in his certificate used clear and unambiguous language to state that any postmortem examination would violate his/her religious convictions.
- C) Be signed and dated by the decedent.
- D) Be signed by two witnesses.
 - 1. Each witness must include his/her residence address.

1116.4 BODY EXAMINATION

In all cases where an autopsy is not performed based on the presence of a valid certificate of religious objection, the decedent shall be examined by a Deputy Coroner. The examination may take place at the Coroner Division Facility, unless other case circumstances require a field response in accordance with Coroner Division Policy 1104.

1116.5 COURT PETITION

Pursuant to Government Code 27491.43(b), if a valid certificate of religious belief is produced but the cause of death is not evident and it is in the public interest to determine the cause of death, the Sheriff-Coroner or his/her designee may petition the court for an order authorizing autopsy or an order setting aside the certificate as invalid. Notice of the proceeding shall be given to the person who produced the certificate.

1116.6 AUTHORITY TO SUPERSEDE RELIGIOUS OBJECTION

Even with a valid certificate of religious objection, California Government Code section 27491.43(c) authorizes the Coroner for perform postmortem examinations in any case where there is reasonable suspicion that the death was caused by a criminal act, or contagious disease constituting a public health hazard.

- A) In this instance, and with the approval of the Sheriff-Coroner, the court need not be petitioned.

1116.7 DEATH CERTIFICATE

Death certificates for any case not autopsied on the basis of a religious objection shall be signed with the manner of "Natural" or "Undetermined," based on known case circumstances. The injury description shall read "Religious Objection to Autopsy," and the primary cause of death shall read as follows:

- A) Undetermined
- B) Religious Objection to Autopsy

TRANSPORTATION, BODY REMOVAL, AND RECOVERY OF PARTS

1118.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

As a component of the medicolegal death investigation, the Deputy Coroner may determine that a decedent requires transportation to the Coroner Division Facility for further investigation and/or examination by a Coroner pathologist. This policy establishes requirements of the Deputy Coroner when arranging for the transportation of a decedent or partial human remains.

1118.2 TRANSPORTATION

All decedents received by the Coroner Division Facility shall be transported by the contracted transportation service.

1118.3 BODY REMOVAL

Physical removal of the decedent from the death scene shall be performed only by the contracted transportation service.

1118.4 PARTIAL REMAINS

In the event of body dismemberment, the Deputy Coroner shall make every effort to recover all body parts from the incident or death location.

- A) If any portion of a body cannot be located, the Deputy Coroner shall immediately notify the on-duty Watch Commander, and call for additional resources as needed, to assist with search of the scene.

1118.5 BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Biological evidence, including body parts, may be transported in the trunk of the Deputy Coroner's vehicle, so long as he/she can properly secure the item in an appropriate spill proof container.

CARCINOMA, REPORTING OF

1119.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

California Health and Safety Code 10252 mandates the Coroner to report the existence of any carcinoma, of which he/she has actual knowledge. In accordance with this code section, this policy establishes guidelines for reporting when cancer is discovered at autopsy.

1119.2 DEATH CERTIFICATE REPORTING

When the existence of cancer is discovered during autopsy, and it is not the immediate or underlying cause of death, the cancer shall be reported on the death certificate in the section titled "Other Significant Conditions." If the cancer is not discovered at autopsy, but instead reported only by a clinical source and is not the immediate or underlying cause of death, it is not necessary to report on the death certificate.

CORONER INVESTIGATOR (CI) REPORTS

1120.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

As a component of the death investigation, the Deputy Coroner shall prepare a written Coroner Investigator (CI) report to document facts, findings, and actions taken on a given case. This policy serves to establish rules and guidelines for the creation, content, and completion of the CI report.

1120.2 CASES REQUIRING A CI REPORT

A CI report shall be prepared for any death requiring Coroner death certificate signature pursuant to Government Code 27491. A CI report shall also be required for any death requiring a field response pursuant to Coroner Division policy, or significant level of investigation by the Deputy Coroner in order to determine jurisdiction and/or case disposition.

1120.3 AUTHORSHIP

The CI report shall be created, authored, and edited only by the case's assigned Deputy Coroner.

1120.4 REPORT WRITER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

At a minimum, the Deputy Coroner's CI report shall address the following areas if applicable to the specific case:

- A) Statement provided by the party reporting the death
- B) Body examination
- C) Death scene observations
- D) Witness/informant statements
 - 1. Medical and social histories shall be addressed
- E) Identification, or efforts to identify
- F) Next-of-kin notification, or efforts to locate next-of-kin
- G) Criminal history
- H) Disposition of the body
- I) Disposition of the decedent's residence, vehicle, pets, or other bulk property items not collected by the Deputy Coroner.
- J) Any other relevant statement, action, or observation significant to the death investigation

1120.4.1 PROMPT REPORT COMPLETION

The Deputy Coroner shall prepare all reports received during the assigned shift for supervisory approval prior to the end of such assigned shift. If the Deputy Coroner is unable to complete the CI report due to high call volume or other circumstance, the Deputy Coroner shall at a minimum prepare a briefing summary that addresses all required content outlined in section 1120.4 of this policy; this summary shall be completed prior to the end of shift. The final CI report shall be completed and submitted to the assigned Supervising Deputy Coroner for approval within 10 working days from the date the report of death is received.

1120.4.2 REPORT SPELLING, GRAMMAR, AND CONTENT

Prior to submission for approval, the Deputy Coroner shall review each report for spelling, grammar, and content inaccuracies and make corrections when necessary. Obscure abbreviations and other shorthand shall not be used in the CI report.

1120.5 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Supervising Deputy Coroner shall thoroughly review all submitted reports for completeness and accuracy prior to approval, and require additional information or corrections when necessary. Reports containing obvious spelling and grammatical errors shall be returned to the assigned Deputy Coroner for correction.

1120.6 SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTS

Any member, other than the assigned Deputy Coroner, who ascertains new information or takes an action related to the case shall so document by making an entry in the CME database, on the page titled "Supplemental Case Notes."

CHILD DEATHS

1121.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Child deaths are inherently sensitive in nature and therefore must be investigated with the utmost care and diligence. For this reason, this policy serves to establish the additional requirements of the Deputy Coroner when investigating the death of a child.

- A) Definition: "Child" is defined as any decedent under the age of 18, including fetuses over twenty weeks of gestation.

1121.2 RECORDS CHECKS

The Deputy Coroner shall search criminal records of any adult(s) residing in the decedent's residence, or responsible for the care of the decedent, at the time of his/her death. Record searches shall include, at a minimum:

- A) Prior local and state arrests via the California Law Enforcement Telecommunication System (CLETS)
- B) Prior reports of child abuse via the Child Abuse Registry (CAR)

1121.3 MANDATED REPORTER

Per Penal Code 11165.7, the Coroner is a mandated reporter responsible for reporting suspected child abuse. As such, the Deputy Coroner shall make report of any child whom he/she knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of child abuse or neglect.

- A) The Deputy Coroner shall make the initial report to the Child Abuse Registry immediately, or as soon as practically possible, by telephone.
- B) The Deputy Coroner shall also prepare and send a written follow-up thereof within 36 hours of receiving the information concerning the incident.

1121.4 SUDDEN UNEXPECTED INFANT DEATHS (SUIDS) - NOTIFICATIONS

The Deputy Coroner shall report any death suspected to be a result of Sudden or Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SUIDS) to the Orange County Public Health Nurse, by completing and sending the "SUIDS Notification Form" to the designated representative via email. A copy of this email shall also be sent to the Coroner Division Commander's Secretary.

1121.5 SCHOOL NOTIFICATIONS

The Deputy Coroner shall report the death of any school age child to the Department of Education, by completing and sending the "School Fatality Notification Form" to the designated representative via email. A copy of this email shall also be sent to the Coroner Division Commander's Secretary.

- A) "School age child" is defined as any decedent ages 5-18.

1121.6 DOCUMENTATION

The Deputy Coroner shall document completion of all requirements outlined in this policy in CME on the page titled "Child Death." Additionally, the Deputy Coroner shall complete all remaining sections of the "Child Death" page, when applicable to circumstances of the death.

1121.7 CHILD DEATHS INVOLVING A FIREARM

Deputy Coroners investigating any firearm related death of a child in the jurisdiction of the Orange County Sheriff's Department shall:

- A) Notify the Orange County Crime Lab and request a forensic photographer's presence at both the death location and autopsy examination.
- B) Notify Orange County Sheriff's Department – Homicide Division of the death.
 - 1. If the Homicide Division declines to investigate the case, the Deputy Coroner may proceed with his/her death investigation in accordance with Division policy and procedure.
- C) All notifications shall be clearly documented in the Coroner Investigator (CI) report.
- D) If the death occurs outside of the jurisdiction of the Orange County Sheriff's Department, this policy section does not apply.

INDIGENT AND UNCLAIMED REMAINS

1122.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Health and Safety Code Section 7104 permits the Coroner to inter remains in cases where the decedent has insufficient assets and next-of-kin is either unable to be located or fails to perform his/her duty of interment. This policy establishes rules and guidelines for the handling of indigent and unclaimed remains held at the Coroner Division Facility.

1122.2 RESPONSIBILITY FOR DISPOSITION OF INDIGENT AND UNCLAIMED REMAINS

The person responsible for facilitating disposition of indigent and unclaimed remains, under the jurisdiction of the Coroner Division, shall be the Supervising Deputy Coroner assigned to indigent bodies.

1122.3 UNCLAIMED REMAINS

For any death where the decedent's next-of-kin with the right to control disposition and arrange for funeral goods and services has been successfully located and notified of the death, but fails to act, or fails to delegate his or her authority to act to some other person, disposition shall be made as follows:

- A) When the decedent is not in possession of the Coroner Division, the next-of-kin in control of remains shall be allowed seven (7) days, or ten (10) days if said person is the competent surviving spouse, to arrange for disposition before his/her rights are passed to the person(s) with next degree of kinship.
 - 1. If all known next-of-kin fails to arrange for disposition of the remains, the Supervising Deputy Coroner may refer the case to the Public Administrator for evaluation of the decedent's estate.
 - a. If the decedent is found to have sufficient assets, the Public Administrator will arrange for final disposition of the remains.
 - b. If the decedent is found to have insufficient assets, the Supervising Deputy Coroner shall arrange for final disposition of the remains.
- B) When the decedent is in the possession of the Coroner Division, the next-of-kin in control of remains shall be allowed thirty (30) days to arrange for disposition of the remains before his/her rights may be passed to the person(s) with next degree of kinship.
 - 1. If all known next-of-kin fails to arrange for disposition of the remains, the Supervising Deputy Coroner may refer the case to the Public Administrator for evaluation of the decedent's estate.
 - a. If the decedent is found to have sufficient assets, the Public Administrator will arrange for final disposition of the remains.
 - b. If the decedent is found to have insufficient assets, the Supervising Deputy Coroner shall arrange for final disposition of the remains.

1122.4 INDIGENT REMAINS

Any death not under the jurisdiction of the Coroner, but found by the Public Administrator to have no known next-of-kin and insufficient assets for final disposition of remains, may be referred to the Coroner Division by the Public Administrator. In such instances, the Supervising Deputy Coroner shall accept the case, and perform a diligent search for next-of-kin. If none are located, the Supervising Deputy Coroner shall arrange for final disposition of the remains.

- A) The Supervising Deputy Coroner may pursue General Relief funds to cover the cost of disposition.

FOREIGN NATIONAL DEATHS

1123.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Article 37(a) of the Vienna Convention of Consular Relations requires authorities to inform the respective consular post of any death of a foreign national of the sending State. This policy establishes the requirement of Coroner Division members to make the proper notification.

1123.2 POLICY

All deaths of foreign nationals shall be reported to their respective consulates as soon as practical. The on-duty Watch Commander, or his/her designee, shall be responsible for ensuring that proper notification has been made. The preferred method of notification shall be via facsimile of the Coroner Division "Foreign National Death" form.

GENDER IDENTITY

1124.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Health and Safety Code 102875 mandates that, in all cases requiring death certification by the coroner, the person completing the certificate shall record the decedent's sex to reflect the decedent's gender identity. This policy provides rules and guidelines for establishing a decedent's gender identity.

1124.2 DETERMINING GENDER

The Deputy Coroner and/or Supervising Deputy Coroner shall determine gender identity based upon the following:

- A) Observation of the sex organs and/or general presentation/appearance of the decedent.
- B) As reported by the informant
 - 1. If the gender reported by the informant differs from that decided by the Deputy Coroner based on his/her own observations, the gender reported by the informant shall take precedence.
 - a. Example: If the Deputy Coroner's observations lead him/her to conclude that a decedent is male, however an informant reports that the decedent is female, that decedent shall be listed as female.

1124.3 GENDER DISPUTES

If the Deputy Coroner and/or Supervising Deputy Coroner is notified of a dispute regarding the decedent's gender identity, the person disputing the gender shall be asked to produce any of the following documents in order to prove the legal gender at the time of the decedent's death. If such a document is produced, the person completing the certificate shall record the decedent's sex as that which corresponds to the decedent's gender identity as indicated in the document. Acceptable documentation includes:

- 1. Birth certificate
- 2. Driver's license
- 3. Social security record
- 4. Court order approving a name or gender change
- 5. Passport
- 6. An advanced health care directive
- 7. Proof of clinical treatment for gender transition

If none of these documents are presented, and the person, or majority of persons, with the right to control the remains pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 7100 is in disagreement with the gender identity reported by the informant, the gender identity shall be as reported by that person or majority of persons.

1124.4 DOCUMENTATION

If determination of the decedent's gender, in accordance with guidelines established within this policy, results in the gender identity differing from that suggested by presentation of the sex organs, explanation of the gender change shall be documented in the Coroner Investigator (CI) report.

CORONER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

1125.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Coroner Division interns are assigned from either the general County internship program, or in partnership with the Orange County Crime Lab's internship program. This policy establishes rules and guidelines for any intern(s) at the Coroner Division, and shall be applied in addition to the County of Orange "Standards for Utilization of Volunteers" policy.

1125.2 APPLICATION PROCESS

Interns shall be authorized to serve at the Coroner Division only after successfully completing the County approved internship application process as well as a comprehensive background check.

1125.3 INTERN UNIT ASSIGNMENT

Coroner Division interns shall be assigned to the Investigations, Forensics, or Anthropology units according to the needs of the Division, with consideration to the academic, career, and/or personal development goals of the intern.

1125.4 CORONER DIVISION INTERNSHIP COORDINATOR

The intern shall directly report to the assigned Coroner Division Internship Coordinator. In coordination with the intern, the Internship Coordinator shall be responsible for establishing the intern's schedule and duration of participation in the program.

1125.5 INVESTIGATIONS UNIT INTERNS

The on-duty Watch Commander shall assign the intern to a Senior Deputy Coroner at the onset of every shift. The responsibility for the integrity of all components of any death investigation with which the intern assists shall remain with the FTO supervising the intern.

1125.5.1 INVESTIGATIONS UNIT INTERNS APPROVED DUTIES

Interns assigned to the Investigations Unit are authorized to perform the following duties:

- A) Answer incoming phone calls.
 - 1. Assist members of the public with general questions.
 - 2. Receive initial reports of death from law enforcement or medical personnel, query circumstances of the death to determine jurisdiction.
- B) Data entry into the CME database.
- C) Initiate a case.
 - 1. Cases created by an intern will be designated by the suffix "INT"
Example: 18-01234-INT
 - 2. Cases created by an intern shall be transferred to the assigned Senior Deputy Coroner as soon as practicable.
- D) Respond to a death scene with the assigned Senior Deputy Coroner, to observe and assist at the discretion of the Senior Deputy Coroner.

- E) Assist with the inventory and booking of medications and other evidence on cases with no known potential for criminal prosecution.
- F) Assist with the inventory and booking of a decedent's personal property.
- G) Witness the release of a decedent's personal property, and sign the property release form as a witness.
- H) Check-in a decedent arriving at the Coroner Division Facility.
- I) File holographic wills with the Orange County Clerk-Recorder.
- J) Other duties as assigned.

1125.5.2 INVESTIGATIONS UNIT INTERNS PROHIBITED DUTIES

Interns assigned to the Investigations Unit are prohibited from performing the following duties:

- A) Entering a residence on known or suspected homicide deaths.
- B) Collection of evidence while on scene.
- C) Collection of a decedent's personal property.
- D) Handling a firearm at any time
- E) Inventorying or booking evidence on any known or suspected homicide death.
- F) Respond to a scene without the supervision of a Deputy Coroner.
- G) Drive a County vehicle.

1125.6 FORENSIC UNIT INTERNS

Interns assigned to the Forensic Unit shall perform all duties under the direct supervision of a Senior Forensic Assistant.

1125.6.1 FORENSIC UNIT INTERNS APPROVED DUTIES

Interns assigned to the Forensics Unit are authorized to perform the following duties:

- A) Data entry into the CME database.
- B) Check-in a decedent arriving at the Coroner Division Facility.
- C) All autopsy procedures.
- D) All cleaning, room preparation, and restocking.
- E) Specimen evidence collection, tracking, and housing.
- F) Other duties as assigned.

1125.6.2 FORENSIC UNIT INTERNS PROHIBITED DUTIES

Interns assigned to the Forensics Unit are prohibited from performing the following duties:

- A) Collection, inventory, or booking of a decedent's personal property.
- B) Release of remains.
- C) Discard of specimens.
- D) Autopsy or evidence handling on known or suspected homicide cases.
- E) Drive a County vehicle.

MEDICAL RECORDS

1126.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

As a component of the death investigation, it is often necessary to evaluate a decedent's medical and/or psychological records from physicians or medical facilities where a decedent was treated prior to death. California Civil Code section 56.10(b)8 provides the coroner legal authority to obtain such medical information, and this policy establishes rules and guidelines for the review and handling of a decedent's confidential medical records.

1126.2 AUTHORITY TO REQUEST RECORDS

A copy of the decedent's medical and/or psychological records may be requested from the health care provider(s) at the discretion of the handling Deputy Coroner, or upon request by a Supervising Deputy Coroner, member of Coroner Division management, or the contract pathologist.

1126.3 OBTAINING RECORDS

Medical and/or psychological records may be obtained in the following manner:

- A) Written request, using the appropriate Coroner Division medical records request form.
 - 1. Written request shall be the preferred method of obtaining records.
- B) Written consent from the decedent's next-of-kin in control of the remains.
- C) Subpoena
 - 1. Issuance of a subpoena for medical or psychological records shall be approved by the Coroner Division Commander.

1126.4 CONFIDENTIALITY

Medical and psychological records obtained by any member of the Coroner Division shall be treated as confidential and may not be reproduced or made available to any person other than as provided for in Government Code section 27491.1 or Civil Code section 56.13.

1126.5 SUMMARIZATION

Any information obtained from a decedent's medical or psychological records that is used to assist in the establishment of identification, cause or manner of death, or notification of next-of-kin, shall be summarized by the Deputy Coroner in the Coroner Investigator (CI) report.

1126.6 DISCARDING RECORDS

All copies of medical and psychological records, including digital copies, shall be discarded by the Supervising Deputy Coroner at the time of case closure.

- A) Any medical or psychological records with evidentiary value are exempt from discard, and instead shall be booked as evidence in accordance with Coroner Division Policy 1100.

MEDIA, INTERVIEWS AND INQUIRIES

1127.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

It is the policy of the Orange County Sheriff's Department to insure the public's right to know by establishing a consistent and cooperative means of communicating public information through the news media. This policy establishes rules and guidelines for media releases from Coroner Division personnel and is written in accordance with Department policy 346.

1127.2 WATCH COMMANDER RESPONSIBILITY

All media inquiries shall be routed to the on-duty Coroner Watch Commander.

1127.3 METHODS OF INFORMATION RELEASE

The Coroner Press Release website shall be the preferred method of information release to the news media. In the event that the website is not available, or information is not yet updated, the on-duty Watch Commander may release the approved information, detailed in section 1127.4 of this policy, by telephone.

1127.4 APPROVED INFORMATION FOR RELEASE

The following information may be released on all routine, non-criminal cases:

- A) Identification of the decedent
 - 1. The decedent's name shall not be released until after his/her legal next-of-kin has been located and notified of the death.
- B) Age of the decedent
- C) The decedent's city of residence
- D) The date, time, and location of the death
- E) The cause of death as it appears on the death certificate
 - 1. The on-duty Watch Commander shall make every effort to ensure that the decedent's legal next-of-kin is informed of the cause of death prior to releasing this information to the news media.

1127.5 HIGH PROFILE, SUSPICIOUS, OFFICER INVOLVED/IN-CUSTODY AND/OR HOMICIDE DEATHS

- A) All media inquiries reference high profile death investigations shall be directed to the Orange County Sheriff's Department's assigned Public Information Officer.
- B) The Coroner Watch Commander may release information in section 1127.4 of this policy for suspicious, high profile, officer involved/in-custody or homicide deaths, only with authorization from both the investigating law enforcement agency and a member of the Coroner Division management team.

1127.6 MEDIA INTERVIEWS

At no time shall any member of the Coroner Division make comments, speculate, or editorialize information related to a death investigation, without prior approval from the Coroner Division Commander. Any request for interview shall be referred to the Department's Public Information Officer.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

1128.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Federal regulations require that personal protective equipment (PPE) be worn by all personnel involved in the performance of an autopsy, and by all observers in close proximity to the examination. This policy is written in accordance with Department policy 1016 and establishes the minimum requirements for personal protective equipment to be worn by Coroner Division personnel as well as autopsy attendants.

1128.2 REQUIRED PPE FOR DIRECT PARTICIPANTS

All persons directly involved in the performance of an autopsy, including the Forensic Assistant, Coroner Pathologist, and other Department personnel, shall wear the following articles of personal protective equipment for the duration of the examination:

- A) Full coverage apron, worn over clothing
- B) Full face mask (N95 or greater), or respirator-style mask
 - 1. Any style face mask shall first be properly fitted via the established mandatory fit-testing process.
- C) Eye protection
- D) Gloves
 - 1. Preferably, two pairs of gloves will be worn layered
- E) Head and/or hair covering
- F) Full shoe covers

1128.3 AUTOPSY OBSERVERS

Any observer indirectly involved in the performance of the autopsy, shall wear, at a minimum, the same articles of personal protective equipment required of the direct participant.

- A) For purposes of this policy section, "observer" is defined as any person(s) physically present in the autopsy suite at the time of examination. Any person(s) observing an autopsy from a designated observation room or balcony is excluded from this requirement.

1128.4 PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT SUBSTITUTIONS

All persons required to wear personal protective equipment may substitute any item listed in this with an alternate equivalent, provided that the safety of the autopsy participant is not compromised.

- A) Example: A coverall suit may be worn in place of an apron.

EMBALMING

1129.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

On occasion, the circumstances of a death or indication of possible injury to the deceased warrant the decedent being embalmed in an effort to expose or accentuate evidence of trauma. This policy establishes those cases requiring embalming at the Coroner Division Facility.

1129.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Coroner Division to embalm all decedents whose death falls in any one of the following categories:

- A) Homicide deaths, when it is known or suspected that physical contact between parties occurred prior to death.
- B) Officer-involved deaths.
- C) In-custody deaths.
 - 1. Post-custodial deaths will be embalmed at the discretion of the Coroner Division Commander or his/her designee.
- D) Deaths with known or suspected abuse or neglect.
- E) Long-term unidentified persons.
- F) Any death where embalming is requested by the Coroner pathologist, assigned Deputy Coroner, on-duty Watch Commander, or investigating law enforcement agency.
 - 1. Requests for embalming of cases not specifically outlined in this policy section shall be approved by the Coroner Division Commander or his/her designee.

1129.3 EMBALMED BODIES, PROCESSING

- A) Embalming shall take place only after the pathologist's autopsy examination is completed.
- B) All embalmed decedents shall remain at the Coroner Division Facility for a minimum of 48 hours following the embalming procedure.
- C) All embalmed decedents shall be photographed by the Orange County Crime Lab's photographer after the 48-hour period has passed.
 - 1. Arrangements for post-embalming photographs shall be the responsibility of the on-duty Forensic Assistant.
- D) No embalmed decedents shall be released to a funeral home prior to completion of the post-embalming photographs.
 - 1. Any request for early release or extended holding of the decedent shall be approved by the Coroner Division Commander or his/her designee.

PUBLIC SPEAKING AND PRESENTATIONS

1130.1 POLICY

It is the policy of the Coroner Division that all staff members shall obtain approval from the Coroner Division Commander or his/her designee, prior to any public speaking engagement, if any of the following apply:

- A) The member is presenting as a representative of the Orange County Sheriff's Department.
- B) The member references the Orange County Sheriff's Department in his/her presentation.
- C) The member is using photographs or visual aids obtained from the Orange County Sheriff's Department.
 - a. Any presentation utilizing photographs or visual aids (i.e. a PowerPoint) shall be reviewed by the presenters supervisor or member of management prior to the approved public speaking engagement
- D) The speaking engagement was facilitated through official Orange County Sheriff's Department contacts.
- E) The presentation will include information from cases obtained in an official capacity.

1130.2 DEFINITION

For purposes of this policy, "Public" is defined as an audience that contains any person(s) who is not a member of the Coroner Division.

PHOTOGRAPHS

1132.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The taking of photographs by Coroner Division personnel is an important tool used to visually preserve components of the death investigation, including the death location, the decedent, pertinent evidence, and autopsy findings. This policy serves to establish rules and guidelines for the taking, storing, and release of photographs by Coroner Division personnel.

1132.2 DEFINITION

For purposes of this policy, "photographs" refers to any printed, digital, or video image, or other forms of visual media.

1132.3 TAKING OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs shall be taken in all of the following instances:

- A) The Deputy Coroner shall document with photographs any decedent, death scene, or place of injury to which he/she responds in the course of a death investigation.
 - 1. Photographs shall include any pertinent evidence found at the scene, or on/near the decedent's person.
- B) The Forensic Assistant shall take at least one facial photograph of any decedent received at the Coroner Division Facility, and of autopsy findings when requested by the Coroner's pathologist.

1132.3.1 INSTRUCTIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Instructional photographs of a decedent and/or death location taken in the normal course of duty may be used for instructional purposes with the approval of the Coroner Division Commander or his/her designee.

1132.4 PERMITTED DEVICES

Authorized photographs shall be taken on a Department issued digital camera. In the event of a digital camera failure and in exigent circumstances (i.e. another digital camera is unavailable, evidence may be lost, etc.) a department issued cell phone may be used to take photographs. The use of a cell phone to take photographs should only be used as a last resort.

1132.5 STORAGE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Printed photographs and other non-digital photographic mediums (i.e. discs or video tapes), shall be stored in the physical case file. Digital photographs shall be uploaded to the Coroner Division's photograph database (LYNX) for permanent storage.

- A) Once the digital upload to LYNX is completed, photographs may be deleted from the original device.
- B) Photographs may not be duplicated from a case file or LYNX without approval from the Coroner Division Commander.

1132.6 RELEASE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

A) Any request for release of photographs shall be referred to the Clerical Unit for review and processing. A member of the clerical unit shall review the request for legality, pursuant to Code of Civil Procedures 129 prior to the release of any photographs.

B) Members of the Coroner Division may not display or make available any photographs of a decedent, death location, or taken within the Coroner Division Facility without prior approval from the Coroner Division Commander.

TOXICOLOGY REQUESTS

1133.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

A forensic toxicology screen is often a critical component of the death investigation and in some cases is required by law. This policy establishes the categories of death investigations that shall require a toxicology screen, as well as the rules and guidelines for submitting a toxicology request.

1133.2 DEATHS REQUIRING A TOXICOLOGY SCREEN

The following categories of acute deaths shall require a toxicology screen in addition to the postmortem examination (complete autopsy or external examination):

- A) Any death where an obvious cause of death is not discovered at autopsy
- B) Suspected overdoses or poisonings
- C) Suspected neglect deaths, with alleged under-administration or withholding of medications
- D) Suspected carbon monoxide deaths, including those resulting from scuba, aircraft, or fire related incidents
- E) Drownings
- F) Industrial accidents
- G) All other traumatic deaths
- H) State hospital patient deaths where a Coroner postmortem examination was performed
- I) Sudden and Unexpected Infant Deaths, and Sudden and Unexpected Deaths of Children
- J) Deaths that are known or suspected to be the result of a homicide
- K) Officer involved deaths
- L) When the death occurred while in the custody of a law enforcement agency
- M) Any death where the handling Deputy Coroner and/or contract forensic pathologist believe that case history or circumstances warrant a toxicological assessment

1133.2.1 DELAYED DEATHS REQUIRING A TOXICOLOGY SCREEN

A delayed death, defined as any death occurring more than 24 hours after the incident *and* where ante-mortem specimens are unavailable, does not always require a toxicology screen. Toxicology screens on a delayed death may be performed if the handling Deputy Coroner and/or contract forensic pathologist believe that case history or circumstances warrant a toxicological assessment.

- A) The following deaths are excluded from this exception and shall always require a toxicology screen, regardless of delay or existence of ante-mortem specimens:
 - 1. Suspected iatrogenic overdoses
 - 2. Deaths that are known or suspected to be the result of a homicide
 - 3. Officer involved deaths
 - 4. When the death occurred while in the custody of a law enforcement agency

1133.3 PREPARING AND SUBMITTING THE TOXICOLOGY REQUEST

The handling Deputy Coroner shall be responsible for preparing and submitting toxicology requests on all cases outlined in section 1133.2 of this policy within 4 working days of the postmortem examination. On

the request, the Deputy Coroner shall provide a brief statement regarding the circumstances of death, including any suspected drugs or medications that may have been prescribed to or consumed by the decedent. The Deputy Coroner shall also list any paraphernalia that was discovered in the course of his/her scene investigation. The Deputy Coroner shall send the completed toxicology request to the Forensics Unit. Upon receipt of the request, a Forensic Assistant shall transport both the requests and the necessary specimens to the Orange County Crime Lab for toxicology screening.

In cases where the assigned Deputy Coroner is on vacation or on an unexpected leave prior to submitting the toxicology request, their assigned Supervising Deputy Coroner shall be responsible for ensuring a toxicology request is submitted within the above mentioned 4 working days of the postmortem examination.

1133.3.1 MEDICAL RECORDS

If applicable, the Deputy Coroner may include with the request a decedent's medical records relative to medications, dosages, or time of medication administration to the decedent.

SPECIMEN RETENTION AND DISCARD

1134.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes rules and guidelines for the retention and discard of all external examination and autopsy related specimens.

1134.2 DEPUTY CORONER AUTHORITY

The authority to approve the retention or discarding of any specimen lies with the case's assigned Deputy Coroner. The Deputy Coroner shall order discard or retention of specimens in accordance with this policy.

1134.3 DISCARD SCHEDULE

A) The following specimens shall be discarded six months from the date of autopsy, for all cases except those outlined in section 1134.4 of this policy:

1. Antemortem blood, if applicable
2. Postmortem blood
3. Vitreous fluid
4. Frozen tissue
5. Miscellaneous tissue and swabs

B) The following specimens shall be discarded three years from the date of autopsy, for all cases except those outlined in section 1134.4 of this policy:

1. Fixed tissue

1134.4 RETENTION SCHEDULE

A) All external examination and autopsy related specimens shall be retained indefinitely for the following categories of cases:

1. When the manner of death is classified as Homicide
2. Officer involved deaths
3. When the death occurred while in the custody of a law enforcement agency
4. When the decedent is unidentified
5. When the cause of death is Undetermined
6. When the manner of death is Undetermined and the decedent expired under suspicious or criminal circumstances

B) Retention of all external examination and autopsy related specimens shall be extended for the following categories of cases:

1. When the cause and manner of death remains pending beyond six months
 - a. Specimens shall be retained or discarded upon case closure, in accordance with this policy.

2. When retention is formally requested by the person(s) controlling disposition of the remains, or an attorney representing any interested party.

1134.5 HISTOLOGY RETENTION

All histology blocks and slides shall be retained indefinitely.

1134.6 PRODUCTS OF HUMAN CONCEPTION

Any product of human conception less than 20 weeks gestation shall be considered a specimen and shall be retained for at least 30 days to allow for claim by the legal next-of-kin. If the specimen is not claimed within 30 days, the specimen may be disposed.

If the gestational age is unknown, the product of human conception shall weigh less than 400 grams and measure less than 28 centimeters in length from crown to heel in order to qualify for disposal; any decedents weighing greater than 400 grams and measuring greater than 28 centimeters in length shall be classified as a fetus and released to a funeral establishment in accordance with Policy 1141 of this manual.

Retention of a specimen that is a product of human conception shall be extended when retention is formally requested by the person(s) controlling disposition of the remains, or an attorney representing any interested party.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR CASE REFERRAL

1135.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes rules and guidelines for Coroner case referral to the Orange County Public Administrator.

1135.2 CASES REQUIRING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR REFERRAL

The following categories of deaths shall be referred to the Public Administrator by the assigned Deputy Coroner, following a diligent search for existing next-of-kin:

- A) When the decedent's next-of-kin is unknown.
- B) When there is no surviving next-of-kin.
- C) When the next-of-kin is unable to be located.

For all other deaths, disposition of the remains and any property in possession of the Coroner may be decided by the assigned Deputy Coroner, pursuant to Health and Safety Code 7100.

1135.2.1 DISCRETIONARY REFERRALS

Deaths with the following circumstances may be referred to the Public Administrator at the discretion of the assigned Deputy Coroner:

- A) When the decedent's next-of-kin has been located, but is unable to arrange for disposition of property due to inability to travel, incapacitation by illness, or some other factor(s) prohibiting his/her ability to act.
- B) When the decedent's real property is unable to be secured and is in jeopardy of loss or damage.

1135.3 CASE REFERRAL METHOD

Referrals to the Public Administrator shall be made via facsimile. The referral shall include a completed Public Administrator Summary Report and one copy of the Coroner Investigator (CI) report.

For homicide deaths, in-custody deaths, and officer-involved deaths, the referral shall contain only the Public Administrator Summary Report.

1135.4 RELEASE OF PROPERTY TO THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR

For any case under the jurisdiction of the Public Administrator, property in possession of the Coroner may be released to the Public Administrator without written authorization from the next-of-kin. Property shall be released in accordance with the Coroner Division Property Procedure.

1135.5 DOCUMENTATION

Case referral to the Public Administrator shall be documented by completing the applicable CME fields on the page titled "Kin/Informants." Any communication from the Public Administrator, including updates or

final decisions relevant to the disposition of the decedent's remains and/or property, shall be documented in the Coroner Investigator Report or in CME on the page titled "Supplemental Case Note."

TRAUMA AT AUTOPSY

1136.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Pursuant to Government Code 27491.1, the Coroner shall immediately notify the appropriate law enforcement agency when it is suspected that a death was occasioned by criminal means. As such, this policy establishes rules and guidelines should unsuspected trauma or other reasonable suspicion of foul play be discovered during the postmortem examination (external examination or autopsy).

1136.2 POLICY

When trauma is discovered during the postmortem examination that may be related to the cause of death, and where trauma was not previously suspected by the assigned deputy coroner, the contract pathologist shall immediately halt his/her examination and a member of the Forensics unit shall promptly notify the on-duty Watch Commander of his/her findings.

Upon receiving this notification, the on-duty watch commander shall respond to the autopsy suite and consult with the pathologist regarding his/her discovery of unsuspected trauma or other reasonable suspicion of foul play. If the source of the trauma cannot be reasonably explained as non-criminal based on the decedent's known history and/or circumstances of death, the watch commander shall immediately notify the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the death investigation.

1136.3 AUTOPSY PROCEEDINGS

Any postmortem examination of deaths meeting the criteria of this policy shall not proceed without photographic coverage by the Orange County Crime Lab. The law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the death investigation shall be afforded the opportunity to have a representative present at the postmortem examination, and shall be given reasonable time to respond to the Coroner Division Facility.

ASSISTING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

1137.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (and revised ADA regulations), the Coroner Division is required to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to law enforcement services, programs, and activities. This policy provides rules and guidelines for all members when interacting with persons with disabilities.

1137.2 DEFINITIONS

A) Disabled: A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; a record of such impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment.

B) Physical Impairment: Any psychological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more body systems, such as: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, immune, circulatory, hemic, lymphatic, skin, and endocrine.

C) Mental Impairment: Any mental or psychological disorder such as intellectual disability, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disability.

D) Major Life Activities: Caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, sitting, reaching, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, writing, communicating, interacting with others, and working, or the operation of a major bodily function.

E) Reasonable Accommodation: Any modification or adjustment that is effective in enabling a disabled person to perform major life activities. Any change in the facility, policies, procedures, or the manner in which tasks are completed that enables a disabled person to participate in and receive the same benefits from a program or service.

1137.3 POLICY

It is the policy of the Coroner Division that all members shall make effort to communicate effectively, and make reasonable accommodations for disabled persons. The Coroner Division will not discriminate against or deny any individual access to services, rights, or programs based upon disabilities.

1137.4 FIELD INTERACTIONS

Any Deputy Coroner interacting with disabled persons in the field, shall accommodate said persons in accordance with Section 13 of the Field Operations Manual.

1137.5 ASSISTING DISABLED PERSONS AT THE CORONER DIVISION

All members of the Coroner Division shall make an effort to reasonably accommodate a disabled person while they are in the facility. If any member of the Coroner Division is unable to reasonably accommodate a disabled person they are to immediately notify their supervisor or a member of the Coroner Division management team.

POSTMORTEM X-RAYS AND EQUIPMENT

1139.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

In conjunction with a postmortem examination, postmortem x-rays can be a valuable tool to assist in determination of the cause and manner of death, location of forensic evidence, or identification of a decedent. This policy establishes rules and guidelines for those deaths requiring postmortem x-rays, and the proper use of x-ray equipment.

1139.2 DEATHS REQUIRING FULL BODY X-RAY

All decedents falling into one of the following categories, shall receive full body x-rays prior to autopsy examination:

- A) Homicide deaths;
- B) Officer Involved deaths;
- C) In-custody deaths;
- D) Children, age 7 and under;
- E) Fetuses, when obvious maternal trauma is involved;
- F) Pedestrian vs. auto deaths, when hit and run is known or suspected
- G) Decedents that remain unidentified at the time of autopsy;
- H) Autopsies performed on behalf of an out-of-county law enforcement agency or Coroner/Medical Examiner; or
- I) At the request of the Coroner's pathologist

1139.3 DEATHS REQUIRING POSTMORTEM DENTAL X-RAY

X-Rays for dental comparison shall be performed on all decedents not identifiable by visual or fingerprint identification. Dental x-rays shall be performed following completion of the autopsy.

1139.4 X-RAY RETENTION

All x-rays, both full body and dental, performed at the Coroner Division shall be retained indefinitely.

1139.5 USE OF X-RAY EQUIPMENT

The Senior Forensic Assistant shall ensure that all members of the Forensics Unit adhere to all applicable safety guidelines set forth by the California Department of Public Health Radiologic Health Branch.

X-rays shall be performed only by members of the Forensics Unit. The operator shall be responsible for clearing the x-ray room of non-essential persons prior to and during the taking of x-rays. The operator shall wear the provided operator protection devices, including a lead apron, shield, and gloves, at all times while the x-ray equipment is in use, and shall use the smallest size x-ray beam possible for the given film. No person(s) shall hold the remains or specimens being x-rayed. Any apparent malfunction of the x-ray equipment shall be immediately reported to a Senior Forensic Assistant.

1139.6 PERSONAL MONITORING DEVICES

Personal monitoring devices shall be worn at all times while operating the x-ray equipment. Dose monitoring records shall be recorded in the designated log book, and made available for review by the Department of Health Services upon request. Any report indicating potential overexposure shall be reported to the Department of Health Services immediately.

CAL-OSHA INSPECTIONS

1140.1 POLICY

In accordance with CAL-OSHA regulations, any member of the Coroner Division shall adhere to the following when visited, or notified of a future visit, by CAL-OSHA personnel:

- A. Examine the Inspector's identification badge and/or other credentials
- B. Inquire into the purpose and scope of the inspection
- C. Direct the Inspector to a waiting area
- D. Contact the County Safety Officer and the on-duty Coroner Watch Commander, and provide both with any known information relating to the purpose and scope of the inspection.
 1. The on-duty Coroner Watch Commander shall immediately notify a member of the Coroner management team in person or via telephone of the CAL-OSHA visit.
 2. The County Safety Officer shall be contacted by telephone, at [REDACTED]
 - a. If the County Safety Officer is unavailable, follow the recorded instructions to have him/her paged immediately. If necessary, contact the on-duty Sheriff's Department Commander and request that the County Safety Officer be contacted.

EXTENDED RETENTION REQUESTS

1142.1 POLICY

It is the policy of the Coroner Division to extend retention of any available specimens upon receipt of written request from the legal next-of-kin in control of the remains. Retention shall be extended to one year, beginning with the date of autopsy and expiring on the same date of the following year.

1142.2 RECEIVING THE REQUEST

Any request for extended specimen retention shall be forwarded to the assigned Deputy Coroner. The Deputy Coroner shall acknowledge receipt of the request by completing the applicable fields in the CME database, on the page titled "Specimen Disposition."

DEATH CERTIFICATES

1144.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Health and Safety Code 102860 charges the Coroner with the responsibility of attesting a death certificate for any death where the attending physician, surgeon or physician assistant is unable to provide a cause of death, the death occurs without medical attendance, suicide is suspected, the death occurs following an injury or accident or when there is suspicion that the death was caused by a criminal act of another.

1144.2 CAUSE OF DEATH DETERMINED BY CORONER PATHOLOGIST

The Coroner Division shall create and sign a death certificate for any decedent who undergoes a postmortem examination by a Coroner pathologist.

- A) Fetal deaths- A Certificate of Fetal Death is required when the fetus has advanced to or beyond the 20th week of uterogestation.

1144.2.1 FINALIZED DEATH CERTIFICATES

A finalized death certificate shall be created and attested for all cases where both cause and manner of death are known immediately following postmortem examination, and where release of the cause and manner of death will not negatively impact an ongoing criminal investigation.

1144.2.2 PENDING DEATH CERTIFICATES

Pending death certificates shall be created and attested following the autopsy when any of the following apply:

- A) The cause of death is unknown and further lab studies are required
- B) The manner of death is unknown and further investigation is required
- C) The death was caused at the hands of an Orange County Sheriff's Department employee, or occurred while in the custody of the Orange County Sheriff's Department
- D) When release of the cause of death would be detrimental to an ongoing criminal investigation and a law enforcement agency having jurisdiction has requested that the cause of death not be released.

1144.2.3 DEATH CERTIFICATE AMENDMENTS

An amendment to a pending death certificate created and attested by the Coroner shall be issued as soon as possible once the death investigation is complete, and both cause and manner of death have been determined.

1144.2.4 SIGN-OUT NO AUTOPSY DEATH CERTIFICATES

For policy regarding non-autopsy cases with death certificates co-signed by the Coroner, refer to Policy 1145 of this manual.

1144.3 DEATH CERTIFICATE CREATION

The Clerical Unit shall be responsible for the creation of any death certificate to be attested by the Coroner. Death certificates shall be created via the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) immediately following the postmortem examination. The Data Entry Specialist shall input all information necessary to prepare the certificate for signature, obtained from the CME database, and forward the certificate to the on-duty Coroner Watch Commander upon completion.

1144.4 DEATH CERTIFICATE ATTESTATION

Death certificates shall be attested by the on-duty Coroner Watch Commander via EDRS. In the absence of a Coroner Watch Commander, death certificates shall be attested by the Deputy-In-Charge (DIC).

1144.5 TRANSFER OF DEATH CERTIFICATES TO MORTUARY

The attested Coroner death certificate shall be electronically transferred to the chosen funeral establishment upon the release of remains.

INFORMAL INTERVIEWS

1147.1 POLICY

Informal interviews or correspondence by members of the Coroner Division with private investigators or attorneys are not permitted, unless approved by the Coroner Division Commander or his/her designee. This policy does not apply to informal interviews with interested members of the investigating law enforcement agency or the District Attorney's Office.

1147.2 DEFINITION

For purposes of this policy, "informal interview" is defined as any exchange of information regarding the investigatory facts of a case or autopsy findings with a private attorney or investigator, outside of testimony in a legal proceeding.

HANDLING OF BONE/TISSUE SPECIMENS

1152.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Bones, tissues, and other specimens are commonly collected by or delivered to Coroner Division personnel by law enforcement officers, medical professionals, or members of the public. This policy serves to establish rules and guidelines for the handling of these specimens.

1152.2 DEFINITIONS

- A) Specimen: Bones, tissues, organs, products of conception, and human remains of no forensic value
- B) Forensic Value: Human remains or portions thereof that show evidence of a modern murder or evidence necessary to determine the cause or manner of death, or identity of a deceased person.
- C) Human remains: The body of a deceased person, or portion thereof.

1152.3 FIELD RESPONSES AND TRANSPORTING OF BONE/TISSUE SPECIMENS

The Deputy Coroner receiving a report of a bone or tissue specimen found in the field is not required to respond to the scene when there are no reports of additional evidence in close proximity to the specimen, and collection of the specimen by the finder or reporting law enforcement agency will not result in loss or destruction of the specimen. The Deputy Coroner may direct the finder or reporting law enforcement agency to instead collect the specimen and deliver it to the Coroner Division Facility for examination.

If the finder or reporting law enforcement agency reports multiple specimens and/or skeletal remains located in or near a potential gravesite, the Deputy Coroner shall conduct a field response. Any reports of specimens found under suspicious circumstances shall also require a field response by the Deputy Coroner. The remains may be transported by the Deputy Coroner in the trunk of the Deputy Coroner's vehicle, so long as he/she can properly secure the item in a sealed bag or an appropriate spill proof container.

All bone or tissue specimens in this policy section shall be documented in CME as a Coroner Case. The assigned manner shall be determined based on known case circumstances.

1152.4 NON-HUMAN REMAINS

Any remains determined to be non-human by the Deputy Coroner need not be documented nor transported to the Coroner Division Facility. Any remains where the potential of human origin cannot be ruled out shall be documented in CME with the assigned manner of "Jurisdictional Inquiry" and transported to the Coroner Division Facility for examination by the Forensic Pathologist and/or Forensic Anthropologist.

1152.5 HUMAN REMAINS OF NO FORENSIC VALUE

Any remains thought to be human but of no forensic value (example: educational displays, war relics, museum collections, etc.) shall be documented in CME by the Deputy Coroner and assigned a manner of "Jurisdictional Inquiry." The remains shall be photographed and delivered to the Forensics Unit for examination by the Forensic Pathologist and/or Forensic Anthropologist.

1152.7 HUMAN REMAINS WITH FORENSIC VALUE

If at any point a Deputy Coroner, Forensic Pathologist, or Forensic Anthropologist determine remains to be human and have some forensic value, the remains shall be handled in accordance with Policy 1117 of this manual.

DEATH CERTIFICATES REFERRED BY MORTUARY

1153.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

It is a common occurrence for natural deaths not previously reported to the Coroner Division to be referred by the mortuary, if the attesting physician completes a death certificate and supplies a cause of death or other information that meets a reportable criterion pursuant to Government Code 27491. This policy serves to establish rules and guidelines for the assignment and investigation of these deaths.

1153.2 CASE ASSIGNMENT

It is the responsibility of the on-duty Coroner Watch Commander to ensure that all death certificates referred to the Coroner Division by a funeral establishment are assigned to a Deputy Coroner.

1153.3 INVESTIGATION

The Deputy Coroner assigned to investigate a death referred to the Coroner Division by a funeral establishment shall:

- A) Review the certificate and any accompanying documentation to determine the cause(s) of death or other information that makes the death reportable pursuant to Government Code 27491.
- B) Create a new case in the CME database, and enter all applicable information in the respective data fields.
- C) Conduct any necessary follow-up investigation, the level of which shall be dictated by the reportable criterion listed on the death certificate
 - 1. Some death certificates will require no further investigation, as they are reported for dates of attendance only, the reportable criterion is listed on the "Other Significant Conditions" section of the death certificate, or the attesting physician provided sufficient underlying medical history to explain the cause/origin of the reportable criterion.
- D) Provide the reporting funeral establishment with the Coroner case number once all necessary follow-up investigation is completed.
- E) Complete all required CME fields and submit the case to the Coroner Watch Commander for review and closure.

1153.4 REFERRED DEATH CERTIFICATES REQUIRING CORONER ATTESTATION

If a Deputy Coroner investigating a death referred by death certificate by a funeral establishment determines that the certificate also requires Coroner attestation, he/she shall refer to Policy 1145 (Sign Out - No Autopsy) of this manual.

DECLINE CASES

1155.1 POLICY

For record-keeping purposes, it is the policy of the Coroner Division to record all deaths reported to the Coroner, even when those deaths do not fall under Coroner jurisdiction pursuant to California Government Code 27491. Any death that does not meet reportable criteria shall be recorded in the CME database as a Decline case.

1155.2 DEPUTY CORONER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Deputy Coroner receiving report of death shall query the death circumstances and/or decedent's history, obtaining sufficient information to determine whether the death falls under Coroner jurisdiction. If it is determined that the death is not reportable to the Coroner, the Deputy Coroner shall:

- A) Create a "New Decline Case" in the CME database
- B) Complete all data fields
- C) Assign a Decline Case Number

1155.3 WATCH COMMANDER RESPONSIBILITIES

The on-duty Coroner Watch Commander shall be responsible for reviewing and closing all Decline cases reported during their given shift. Any Decline case that appears to have been declined erroneously shall be assigned to a Deputy Coroner for further investigation.