

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 AUTHORITY

The authority to approve the retention or discarding of any specimen lies with the case's assigned Deputy Coroner. Upon case closure, 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:

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

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.