

CHAPTER 17

Medical Examiner Department

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The Medical Examiner Department (MED) investigates sudden, unexpected, violent, and suspicious deaths. Accurate and timely medicolegal investigations and determination of causes and manners of death are essential to the community and public safety.

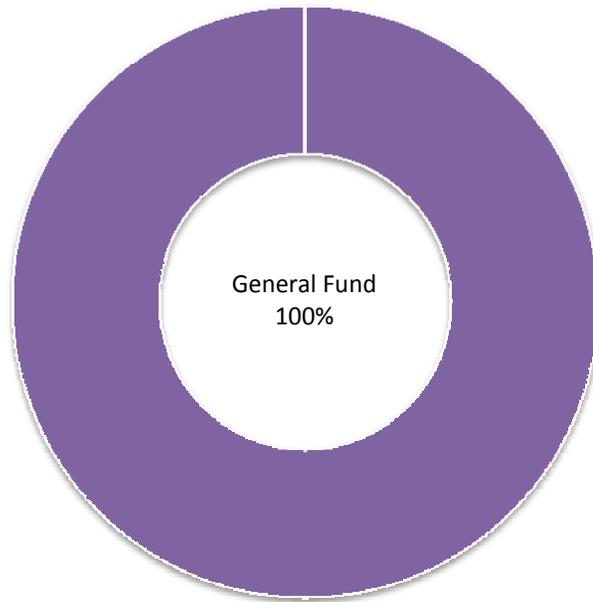
The department's goals are to:

- Provide accurate certification of the cause of death and to identify, document and interpret relevant forensic scientific information, while maintaining a high level of competence.
- Protect the public health by (a) diagnosing previously unsuspected contagious disease and (b) identifying trends affecting the lives of our citizens such as drug-related deaths, number of traffic fatalities, teen suicides, etc.
- Identify new types of illicit drugs appearing in our community.
- Identify hazardous environmental conditions in the workplace, home, and elsewhere.

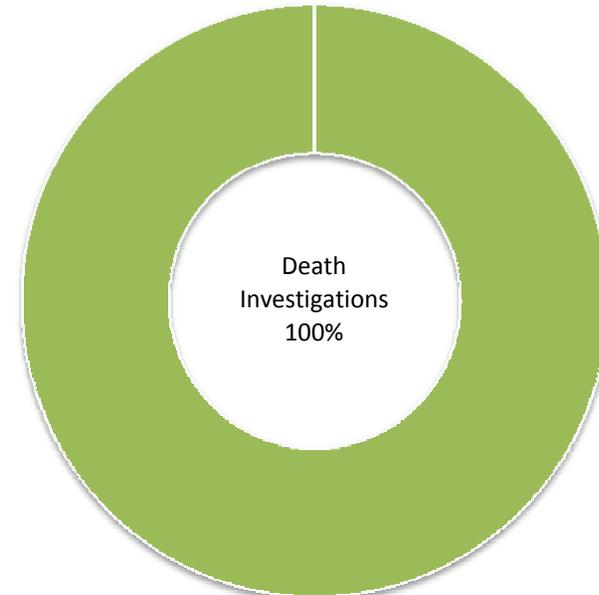
To provide accurate, dignified, compassionate, and professional death investigative services for the City and County of Honolulu's residents and visitors.

- Mission Statement

Funding Sources



Funding Uses



	Operating Expenditures (\$ million)	Staffing			Overtime Expenditures ²			
		Total Authorized FTE	Total Vacant FTE	Cost per FTE ¹	Total	Non-Holiday	Investigations ³	Autopsies ⁴
FY2009	\$1.4	19.0	3.0	\$75,732	\$44,570	\$25,789	1,924	438
FY2010	\$1.4	19.0	3.0	\$74,721	\$37,584	\$23,475	1,982	472
FY 2011	\$1.2	19.0	5.0	\$65,079	\$48,922	\$31,180	2,149	558
FY 2012	\$1.4	19.0	2.0	\$71,318	\$44,852	\$29,877	2,213	454
FY 2013	\$1.5	19.0	4.0	\$78,646	\$58,819	\$40,965	2,228	623
Change from last year	10%	0%	100%	10%	31%	37%	1%	37%
Change over last 5 years	4%	0%	33%	4%	32%	59%	16%	42%

Source: Department of Budget Fiscal Services and Medical Examiner Department. ¹Cost Per FTE = Total Operating Expenditures/Total Authorized FTE. ²Overtime pay is established by bargaining unit agreement, as applicable. ³Investigations help determine the cause and manner of death, and provide expert testimony in criminal or civil litigation. ⁴FY 2013 includes adjusted external examination (3:1) totals as recommended by National Association of Medical Examiners.

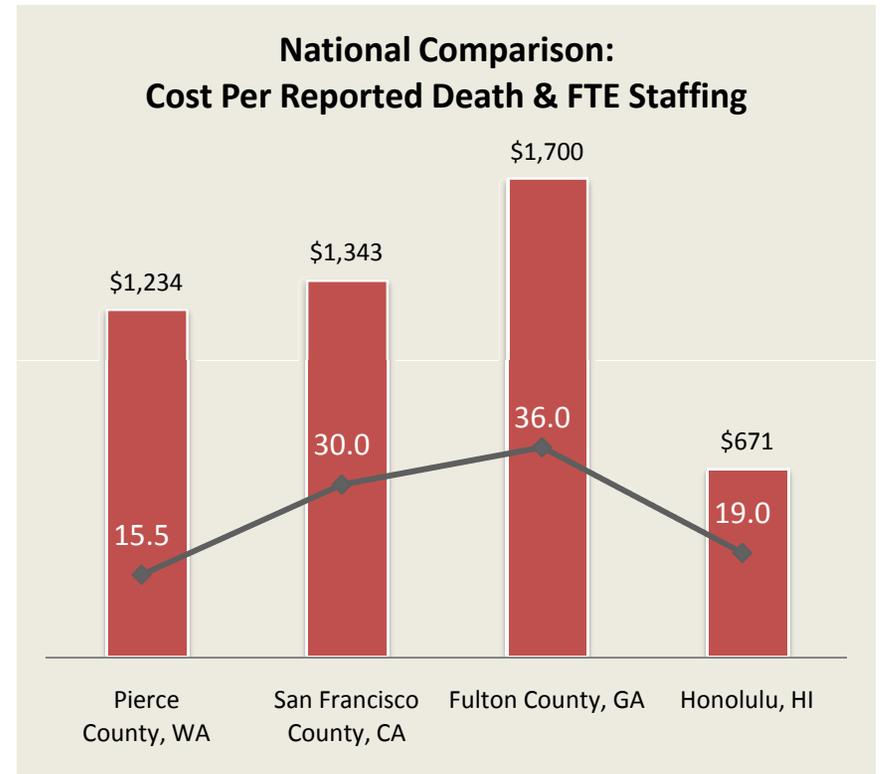
Spending and Staffing

MED is staffed by physicians qualified for the practice of Forensic Pathology, medical examiner investigators, laboratory technicians, prosecutor assistants, and administrative personnel. Subsequent to the retirement of its Chief Medical Examiner, a Forensic Board-Certified Pathologist, the department continued to perform in accordance with accreditation standards due to the hiring of a full time Forensic Board-Certified Forensic Pathologist, contracting of a forensic board-certified pathologist, and utilizing an anatomic board-certified pathologist to perform autopsies in FY 2013. During FY 2013, efforts to recruit the city's Chief Medical Examiner were nearing completion.

Over the past five years, the department's vacant FTEs increased 33%. The department attributes the increase to an increase in its investigator turnover.

The department's overtime expenditures increased 32% and non-holiday overtime expenditures increased 59% from FY 2009 to FY 2013. The department attributes the increase in overtime expenditures to the increase in the number of deaths investigated.

The number of investigations and autopsies increased respectively by 16% and 42% from FY 2009 to FY 2013.



Source: Medical Examiner Department, Hawai'i State Data Book 2012, and various county websites.

County	Population	Staff Size	Reported Deaths	Coroner Budget	Cost per Reported Death ¹
Pierce County, WA	811,681	15.5	1,872	\$2,310,960	\$1,234
San Francisco County, CA	825,963	30.0	4,412	\$5,924,997	\$1,343
Fulton County, GA	977,773	36.0	2,227	\$3,784,793	\$1,700
Honolulu, HI	976,372	19.0	2,228	\$1,494,267	\$671

Source: Department of Budget and Fiscal Services, Medical Examiner Department, Hawai'i State Data Book 2012, and various county websites. ¹Cost Per Reported Death = Coroner's Budget ÷ Reported Deaths.