

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Activity Plan 2011-14

Message from the Chief Medical Examiner

I am pleased to present the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner Activity Plan 2011-14. This plan was prepared under my direction and in accordance with the provisions of the *Transparency and Accountability Act*.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is classified as a Category 3 government entity and, as such, must prepare an activity plan taking into consideration the strategic directions of the Minister of Justice. I have taken those directions into account and none are applicable at this time.

As Chief Medical Examiner, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and the achievement of its objective.



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Introduction

The *Fatalities Investigations Act* states that the Chief Medical Examiner is responsible to the minister for the operation of this *Act* in relation to the reporting, investigating and recording of deaths.

Approximately 700 deaths per year come to the attention of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Deaths which are considered reportable are those which are due to violence, accident or suicide, improper or negligent treatment, are sudden and unexpected or occur when an individual is not under active medical care at the time of death and cases where the cause of death cannot be determined. Deaths of this nature account for approximately 30% of the deaths within a jurisdiction.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is also responsible for appointing physicians to act as medical examiners. In addition to the Chief Medical Examiner, there are twenty medical examiners practicing within the province in various locations. The work of these medical examiners is subject to review by the Chief Medical Examiner. Assistance in investigation is provided by police officers employed by the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who are, by virtue of their office, medical examiner's investigators.

Overview

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is located in the Health Sciences Centre, Prince Philip Parkway, St. John's. Independence of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is heightened and enhanced through the employment of the Chief Medical Examiner as a Full Professor in Memorial University of Newfoundland's Faculty of Medicine.

Administrative support is provided by an Administrative Officer with additional clerical support provided for a portion of the year. Files related to the investigations conducted by the office are presently stored at the L.A. Miller Centre, a facility of Eastern Health.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner receives reports of approximately 700 sudden and unexpected deaths per year. According to the Estimates of the Program Expenditure and Revenue of the Consolidated Revenue Fund 2010-11 the budget associated with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for 2010-11 was \$733,000.

Mandate

The mandate of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is contained in the *Fatalities Investigations Act*, Chapter F-6.1, SNL 1995. The Chief Medical Examiner is responsible for operation of the *Act* in relation to the reporting, investigating and recording of deaths, the appointment of physicians as medical examiners and supervision of the performance of their duties required by the *Act*, the appointment of medical examiner's investigators and the education of persons required to perform functions in accordance with the *Act*.

Vision

An environment where the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner responds to those deaths that are appropriately reported in accordance with the *Fatalities Investigations Act*.

Values

The core values of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner provide a guiding framework for those who are required to perform duties in accordance with the *Fatalities Investigations Act*. These values and related action statements are:

<i>Independence:</i>	Each person acts in a neutral fashion when engaged in investigating and reporting sudden and unexpected deaths to ensure the independence of the office is maintained.
<i>Impartiality and Fairness:</i>	Each person performs his/her work without bias.
<i>Empathy:</i>	Each person deals fairly and respectfully with individuals who are affected by a sudden and unexpected death.

Who We Serve

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner serves the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador by investigating those deaths which are reportable to determine the cause and manner of death.

The office also provides information on descendants whose death has been investigated to interested parties, as determined by the Chief Medical Examiner, to help establish an individual's current medical history and/or treatment or to resolve a relative's questions related to a particular death.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner assists family members affected by sudden and unexpected deaths by providing the necessary information to insurance companies, such as completion of medical forms, to resolve claims and to assist in the settling of estates. This service is provided free of charge and constitutes a significant portion of the time spent interacting with the public.

Statistical information regarding the number and causes of death are provided by the office to various federal and provincial government and non-government agencies, amongst which are Transport Canada and the Red Cross. In addition, where possible, the office will participate in research undertaken by graduate students or agencies such as the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information.

Mission

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, as a category 3 entity, has the options of adopting the Department of Justice mission and identifying how it contributes to that mission or developing its own mission. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner acts as an arms length entity and it is not appropriate to adopt the Mission Statement of the Department of Justice. The departmental mission is focused on the work of the department and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner does not have a direct role at this time. Development of a mission with measures and indicators would be redundant to the objectives which are already developed in the current activity plan.

Issue

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner considered government's strategic directions and the key priority of the office is ensuring compliance with the *Fatalities Investigations Act*.

Compliance with *Fatalities Investigations Act*

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner responds to reportable deaths as defined by the *Fatalities Investigations Act*. The response to a particular death is dependent upon the circumstances of the deceased's health, level of health care at the time of death and the suspected cause of death. Some cases may involve a review of information submitted by a medical examiner, a post-mortem examination or even the assistance of a Forensic Anthropologist. The focus of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is consistent over the three years of this plan. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will report on the results of this objective each year of this three year plan.

Objective:	During the time frame 2011-14, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will have responded to deaths that are reported in accordance with the <i>Fatalities Investigations Act</i> .
Measure:	Responded to reported deaths
Indicators:	Conducted file reviews of medical examiner's reports
	Ordered and/or conducted post mortem examinations as appropriate
	Ordered and/or conducted autopsies as appropriate
	Recorded and reported on cause of death

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