

# Medical Examiner

**Chief Medical Examiner:** Jon R. Thogmartin, MD.

**OMB Budget Analyst:** Toni Merrill

## Department Purpose

The Medical Examiner safeguards the rights of each citizen who dies in Pinellas County by determining the cause and manner of death according to the responsibilities and obligations in Chapter 406, Florida Statutes. The Medical Examiner's Office provides both forensic medicine services (investigation of sudden, unexpected, or suspicious death) and forensic laboratory services (chemical and drug analyses) to Pinellas County on a contractual basis.

## Budget Summary

All Funds						
Expenditures	FY24 General Fund	FY24 Non-General Fund	FY24 Total	FY25 General Fund	FY25 Non-General Fund	FY25 Total
Personnel Services	\$263,570	\$0	\$263,570	\$264,490	\$0	\$264,490
Operating Expenses	\$7,965,850	\$0	\$7,965,850	\$8,487,700	\$0	\$8,487,700
Capital Outlay	\$34,430	\$0	\$34,430	\$95,000	\$0	\$95,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,263,850</b>		<b>\$8,263,850</b>	<b>\$8,852,190</b>		<b>\$8,852,190</b>
<b>FTE</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>

Expenditures	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Budget	FY25 Request
Personnel Services	\$240,890	\$144,346	\$245,355	\$263,570	\$264,490
Operating Expenses	\$6,454,579	\$6,941,304	\$7,597,365	\$7,965,850	\$8,487,700
Capital Outlay	\$190,330	\$0	\$236,878	\$34,430	\$95,000
Expenditures Total	<b>\$6,885,799</b>	<b>\$7,085,649</b>	<b>\$8,079,598</b>	<b>\$8,263,850</b>	<b>\$8,852,190</b>
FTE	<b>2.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>

## Topics for Discussion and Budget Drivers

### **Topics for Discussion**

- The interlocal agreement with Pasco County for the use of the ME facility expires on 9/30/2025. There have been no further discussion or indication that Pasco County has future intentions of building its own facility or discontinuing services with Pinellas County.
- An interlocal agreement with the Manatee County Sheriff's Office has been secured to perform DNA analysis. The annual revenue of this contract will be \$250,000, which is already reflected in the budget amounts. Pinellas County will receive 20.0% of this revenue directly.

### **Budget Drivers**

- Overall, the budget increases by \$588,340 to \$8,852,190. This increase is due to the following items below.
- Personnel Services increases by \$5,920 (2.6%) to \$269,490 due to a 3.0% salary adjustment on the mid-point for all employees, and Florida Retirement System (FRS)

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actuarial retirement increases.

- The Department's FTE (Pinellas County employees) remain flat at 2.0. The Medical Examiner is required to maintain County employees to access the National Combined DNA Index System (CODIS).
- Medical Examiner's Professional Services Contract – The General Fund provides funding for salaries, supplies, and travel for ME staff. In FY25, this contract increases \$521,850 (6.6%) due to the increase of salaries, health benefits and increased costs of supplies.
- Capital Outlay increases \$60,000 for the routine replacement of an FTIR-ATR, which is used in the seized drug unit for drug identification and salt form determination, along with the purchase of a DNA GENEMAPPER IDX to stay consistent with other equipment within the lab so all equipment can run and be analyzed on the same version.

### FY25 Decision Packages

- **New FTE for DNA Analyst for rapid DNA technology to local law enforcement (\$95,910, recurring).** This request is to fund an additional DNA Analysis FTE for the introduction of the Rapid DNA technology to local law enforcement which will require the supervision and involvement of the Medical Examiner Laboratory.
  - The funding presented in this document includes the County Administrator's preliminary recommendation not to fund this decision package for the FY25 Proposed Budget.
- **Competitive Pay adjustment for MEO staff (\$175,000, recurring).** This is a request to increase the pay rates for forensic staff at the Medical Examiner's Office to align with other state and local laboratories to mitigate the impending risk to widespread loss of experienced staff to new laboratories being established in neighboring counties.
  - The funding presented in this document includes the County Administrator's preliminary recommendation of this decision package for the FY25 Proposed Budget.

### FY24 Accomplishments

#### Medical Examiner

- Continued accreditation by National Association of Medical Examiners
- 100% of Pathologist positions filled – all board certified.
- >99% of all autopsies completed within 24 hours of receipt of decedent remains.
- >99% of all cremation approvals completed within 12 hours of Funeral Home request.

#### Forensic Lab

- Received the American Society of Crime Laboratory Director's Maximus award for the 3rd consecutive year. This is awarded to the most fiscally and operationally efficient crime laboratories in the world.
- Maintained Accreditation to ISO-17025 which evaluates the quality of forensic science programs.
- Implemented Lean Six Sigma philosophies to increase efficiencies and maintain quality

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services.

- Maintained an average case turnaround time of less than 30 days for all forensic disciplines.

### Budget Summary by Program and Fund

#### **Medical Examiner**

Determines the cause and manner of death according to the responsibilities and obligations in Florida Statutes 406. Performs toxicology on Medical Examiner cases, determines the concentration of alcohol and controlled substances in DUI cases, and determines the DNA profile of samples and chemical composition of items submitted by law enforcement. Additionally, two DNA Specialists are Pinellas County employees and are not included in the Medical Examiner's contract which allows the County to maintain accreditation and provides the lab with access to the National Combined DNA Index System (CODIS).

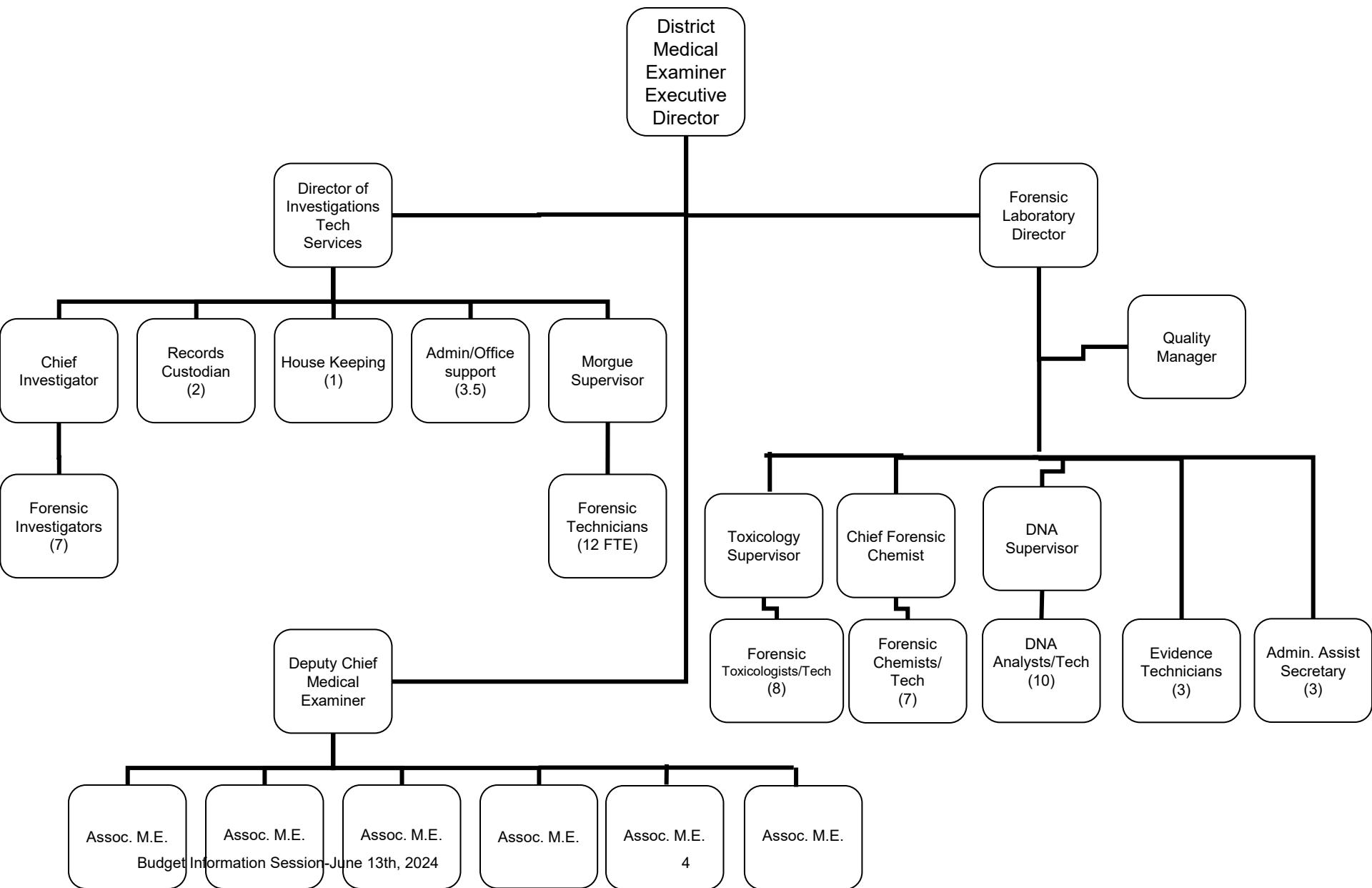
Fund	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Budget	FY25 Budget
General Fund	\$6,885,799	\$7,085,649	\$8,079,598	\$8,263,850	\$8,667,950
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,885,799</b>	<b>\$7,085,649</b>	<b>\$8,079,598</b>	<b>\$8,263,850</b>	<b>\$8,852,190</b>
<b>FTE by Program</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>

#### Attachments:

1. Organizational Chart (p.4)
2. Budget Reports (p.5)
3. Decision Packages Report(s) (p.6-7)
  - a. ID1197- New FTE for Rapid DNA (p.6)
  - b. ID1232- Competitive pay for MEO Forensic (p.7)
4. User Fees Report (p.8)

# Forensic Science Center

Attachment 1- Organization Chart



## Medical Examiner 0001 General Fund

Account	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	Budget to	Budget to
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Budget	Request	Budget Change	Budget % Change
5110001 - Executive Salaries	151,179	92,898	153,409	157,280	161,570	4,290	2.73%
5150001 - One Time COLA Wage Disbursement	0	0	0	1,200	0	(1,200)	-100.00%
5210001 - FICA Taxes	11,297	6,853	10,722	11,940	12,360	420	3.52%
5220001 - Retirement Contributions	37,581	24,459	44,236	51,350	53,980	2,630	5.12%
5230001 - Hlth,Life,Dntl,Std,Ltd	40,833	20,136	36,988	41,800	41,580	(220)	-0.53%
5310001 - Professional Services	6,256,350	6,778,360	7,270,603	7,806,970	8,262,480	455,510	5.83%
5340001 - Other Contractual Svcs	0	1,276	26,999	0	0	0	-
5460001 - Repair&Maintenance Svcs	19,523	17,965	29,054	0	0	0	-
5490001 - Othr Current Chgs&Obligat	0	233	(233)	0	0	0	-
5496551 - Intgv Sv-Risk Financing	48,450	32,430	38,870	24,680	24,680	0	0.00%
5510001 - Office Supplies Exp	0	0	2,369	0	0	0	-
5520001 - Operating Supplies Exp	21,433	1,276	165,028	0	0	0	-
5520004 - Oper. Supplies-Lab	0	84,923	29,316	109,970	164,670	54,700	49.74%
5520016 - MIS Supplies	90,471	0	0	0	0	0	-
5520091 - Equipment purchases under \$5,000	4,116	0	0	0	0	0	-
5520098 - PC Purchases under \$5,000	14,236	24,840	35,359	24,230	35,870	11,640	48.04%
5640001 - Machinery And Equipment	142,630	0	236,878	22,430	50,000	27,570	122.92%
5680100 - Software-Purchased	47,700	0	0	12,000	45,000	33,000	275.00%
Expenditures Total	6,885,799	7,085,649	8,079,598	8,263,850	8,852,190	588,340	7.12%
						0	-
						0	-
						0	-
						0	-
Expenditures Total	13,771,598	14,171,299	16,159,196	16,527,700	17,704,380	1,176,680	7.1%

# Change Request Summary

Attachment 3-Decision Package reports

Report data returned based on the user's security permissions.

Change Request	AUTO - 1197 - New FTE for DNA Analyst for rapid DNA technology to local law enforcement
Budget Year	2025
Change Request Type	Operating Decision Package Request
Change Request Stage	OMB Review [Operating Decision Package Request]
Acct. Reference	
Publish Date	
Description (What is it) *	This request is to fund an additional DNA Analysis FTE for the introduction of the Rapid DNA technology to local law enforcement with will require the supervision and involvement of the Medical Examiner Laboratory.
Summary of Request	This request is to fund an additional DNA Analysis FTE for the introduction of the Rapid DNA technology to local law enforcement with will require the supervision and involvement of the Medical Examiner Laboratory.
Justification *	Due to the technology of the newly implemented Rapid DNA testing that was purchased by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Department, the Medical Examiner department will require an additional "Codis" DNA Analysis.
Ranking	1
Operational Impacts	This additional IT position will allow the office to run more efficiently and process the examination of DNA in the required expected time frame.
Net Operating Budget	95,910
Net Capital Budget	-
Net Budget	95,910

## Operating Budget Details

Account	Position	Description (What is it?)	2025 Budget
Expenses			
631120 - Medical Examiner			
5110001 - Executive Salaries		FY25 1 FTE DNA	95,910
Total 631120 - Medical Examiner			95,910
Total Expenses			95,910
<b>Total</b>			<b>95,910</b>
<b>Net Total</b>			<b>95,910</b>

# Change Request Summary

Attachment 3-Decision Package reports

Report data returned based on the user's security permissions.

Change Request	AUTO - 1232 - Competitive Pay adjustment for MEO staff
Budget Year	2025
Change Request Type	Operating Decision Package Request
Change Request Stage	Department Request [Operating Decision Package Request]
Acct. Reference	
Publish Date	
Description (What is it) *	<p>This is a request to increase the pay rates for forensic staff at the Medical Examiner's Office to align with other state and local laboratories to mitigate the impending risk to widespread loss of experienced staff to new laboratories being established in neighboring counties</p> <p>MEO is proposing a two-year process to make the existing pay structure in line with current Florida pay rates based upon the April 2024 lab survey. This will result in a recurring net increase of 165K in MEO professional services and a 10K to professional salary accounts in year one and an additional 150K in year 2.</p> <p>Pinellas County forensic staff total compensation package are ~20% below 25th percentile and 40% below the 50th percentile for national and 13% for new and 8% for experienced analysts' salaries below the Florida Crime Laboratory System2 member laboratories. Three adjacent counties are in the processes of adding of expanding forensic laboratory services. Hillsborough County plans to start hiring in June with starting salaries at 15K over our current starting salary. Given the exceptional reputation of our laboratory and the current pay scales, there is a high risk of significant loss of experienced staff. Forensic analysis is a highly specialized field where the training of new analysts averages 18 months PRIOR to the assumption of independent casework duties, the loss of a single analyst is significant. The loss of multiple analysts will lead to turn-around-times that would negate the value of forensic analysis for criminal investigative purposes.</p>
Summary of Request	
Justification *	
Ranking	2
Operational Impacts	<p>As a 4-time American Society of Crime Laboratory Director's Foresight Maximus award, Pinellas County is a nationally recognized as a leader in forensic science in both quality and efficiency. As Hillsborough, Manatee, Sarasota, and potentially Pasco counties come online with their expanding forensic services, recruitment from existing staff is inevitable. Loss of experienced staff will result in operation deficiencies that will critically impact the timeliness of criminal justice investigations, exonerations, and prosecutions in Pinellas County.</p> <p>Forensic science is a specialized field and training for new employees is 12-14 months before active casework can be authorized. Every experienced analyst is highly valuable to maintaining our level of service.</p> <p>Across the United States (and especially in Florida), retention and recruitment is a significant issue. Simply put, forensic science staff is a seller's market and there is intense competition for each qualified applicant. The current housing rates in the Tampa Bay area have made Pinellas County a less desirable choice for applicants. If Pinellas does not get ahead of this issue by having more competitive salaries, productivity and efficiency will be impacted.</p>
Net Operating Budget	175,000
Net Capital Budget	-
Net Budget	175,000

## Operating Budget Details

Account	Position	Description (What is it?)	2025 Budget
Expenses			
631120 - Medical Examiner			
5310001 - Professional Services		Increase of competitive wages for ME contracted staff	175,000
Total 631120 - Medical Examiner			175,000
Total Expenses			175,000
<b>Total</b>	Budget Information Session-June 13th, 2024		<b>175,000</b>

**Schedule A**

Fees Paid by Pasco County and outside agencies for Medical Examiner and Forensic  
Laboratory Services

**10/01/24**

Services	
<u>Autopsies-Complete (per case)</u>	\$900.00
<u>Autopsies-Head (per case)</u>	\$150.00
<u>Cases Examined (per case)</u>	\$325.00
<u>Cremation Approval (per approval)</u>	\$30.00
<u>Scene Response (per response)</u>	\$175.00

Laboratory Exams and Related Services	
<u>DUI Drug Screen (per specimen type)</u>	\$325.00
<u>Alcohol Level (per specimen type/time)</u>	\$100.00
<u>Tox Drug Screen – Full (per specimen type)</u>	\$200.00
<u>Tox Drug Screen – Partial (per specimen type)</u>	\$100.00
<u>Tox Drug Quantitation (per drug)</u>	\$110.00
<u>Carbon Monoxide (per case)</u>	\$50.00
<u>Inhalants Screen and Confirmation (per specimen type)</u>	\$100.00
<u>X-RAY -General (per image)</u>	\$50.00
<u>X-RAY -Dental (per image)</u>	\$20.00
<u>Fire Debris Analysis (per item)</u>	\$150.00
<u>Seized Drug Analysis (per item)</u>	\$150.00
<u>DNA Decedent ID - blood (per decedent)</u>	\$450.00
<u>DNA Decedent ID -tooth or bone (per decedent)</u>	\$550.00
<u>DNA STR Forensic Analysis (per item)</u>	\$525.00
<u>DNA YSTR Add-on (per item)</u>	\$400.00

Transport Fees	
<u>Body Transport (per decedent)</u>	\$200.00
<u>Out of County Body Transport (per decedent)</u>	\$300.00
<u>Body pouch (per decedent)</u>	\$50.00

Storage	
<u>Body Storage (per decedent/per day)</u>	\$10.00