

MEDICAL EXAMINER

District Six

Pasco & Pinellas Counties



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Friday, July 8, 2016

TO: Office of Management and Budget
Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Jon R. Thogmartin, M.D.
District Six Medical Examiner
Executive Director, Pinellas County Forensic Laboratory

SUBJECT: FY17 Budget

I wish to thank the Board of County Commissioners for supporting us and the services we provide to the citizens of Pinellas County.

Our office maintains impressive average turnaround times with an average of approximately 26 days for the DNA, 16 days for Chemistry/Fire Debris, and 32 days for Toxicology. The DNA section had a 27% increase in analysis between FY14 and FY15. Pinellas autopsies increased by 2.2 %, and toxicology analysis increased by 9%. The complexity of the workload in toxicology and drug chemistry units has increased significantly with the popularity of new clandestine drugs and drug mixtures including synthetic opioids and PCP. Some of the illicit drugs include substances imported from China, and these have a high level of lethality. Counterfeit pharmaceuticals are a recent find and of great concern due to documented lethal consequences. Synthetic marijuana, “bath salts” and other unusual substances continue to be encountered.

In response to reports by FDLE of a backlog of untested sexual assault kits in Florida, the Florida legislature passed CS/CS/SB 636 - Evidence Collected in Sexual Offense Investigations. Although our laboratory has no DNA backlog of any samples, the effects of this legislation will have a significant impact on our laboratory. We expect 60-90 additional sexual assault kit submissions per year. The anticipated costs will include 2 additional FTE’s as well and a significant increase in supplies. The Florida legislature anticipated the workload increase for state laboratories and has approved

significant budget increases for the FDLE laboratories to compensate. These increases include salary adjustments for laboratory analysts.

In order to be competitive with FDLE and retain our analysts, we will have to make adjustments as well. Due to these legislative actions, our FY16 costs will increase \$84,000 which includes \$25,000 in workspace/remodeling, \$20,000 in equipment/supplies, and \$39,000 in salaries and benefits. Our FY17 budget request has increased by approximately \$226,000 with similar proportional expenditures due to the legislative change.

Our efforts to secure grant funding to mitigate costs to taxpayers continue. For FY 17 the DNA section will utilize \$260,250 dollars in grant funding with an estimated additional \$150,000 grant to be awarded in FY17. The Coverdell grant program will provide \$24,691 for the Chemistry/Toxicology section and \$3000 for the Medical Examiner. The funds will be spent of staff, supplies, and capital equipment.

For FY17, my request will include a 3% average salary increase for the employees mainly as inflation factor adjustment. Our benefits costs have increase by 6% with health care costs rising by an estimated 11.5%.

For many years, we have been able to completely fund machinery and equipment with grants to address pressing equipment needs while otherwise limping along with older machines and instruments (5640001). For FY17, we are requesting \$63,000 in machinery and equipment from county funds which includes \$60,000 for a robotic system for toxicology, \$1750 for a document scanner, and \$1200 for a bone saw. Grant funding will provide \$150,000 for a DNA analyzer and \$3000 for a new body stretcher. These amounts account for the \$215,950 in machinery and equipment.

Our FY17 request is \$5, 9518, 990 which is \$516,990 above our FY16 estimate of \$5,401,810. The bulk of this increase is in response to legislation and the 3% salary inflation factor.