



# DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

## OFFICE OF CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

Barbara Sampson, M.D., Acting Chief Medical Examiner

### What We Do

The Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) is responsible for investigating deaths resulting from criminal violence, accident or suicide; that occur suddenly, when in apparent good health; when unattended by a physician; in custody; or occurring in any suspicious or unusual manner. The Office also investigates deaths where an application for cremation is made. The Office provides additional forensic services, including DNA testing, to support criminal investigations. The Office also manages all functions of the City mortuary, including the retrieval and processing of deceased bodies; assistance with autopsies; and body preparation for City burial.

### Our Services and Goals

#### Service 1: Perform the processes necessary to certify deaths falling within the agency's jurisdiction.

- Goal 1a: Respond promptly to scenes of reportable fatalities and conduct-related investigations.
- Goal 1b: Perform autopsies and examinations necessary to issue timely death certificates.
- Goal 1c: Provide timely investigation for all cremation requests.

#### Service 2: Provide mortuary services to the City.

- Goal 2a: Recover and transport decedents to City mortuary facilities in a timely manner.

#### Service 3: Respond to disasters and emergencies when fatalities are involved.

- Goal 3a: Provide rapid response and safe fatality management services to the City.
- Goal 3b: Identify victims of disasters and return their remains to families in a timely manner.

#### Service 4: Provide DNA services to the City for forensic purposes.

- Goal 4a: Provide timely and accurate DNA laboratory services for criminal justice purposes.

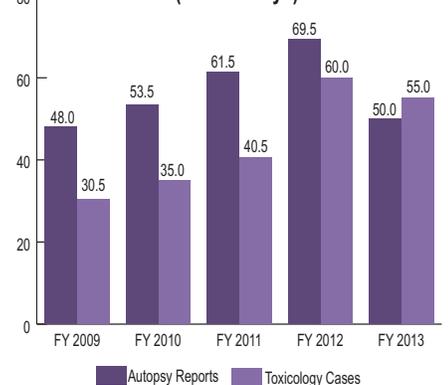
### How We Performed in Fiscal 2013

#### Service 1: Perform the processes necessary to certify deaths falling within the agency's jurisdiction.

##### Goal 1a: Respond promptly to scenes of reportable fatalities and conduct-related investigations.

In Fiscal 2013, the median time for scene arrivals by medicolegal investigators (MLIs) was 1.9 hours, up slightly from Fiscal 2012, when the median arrival time was 1.8 hours. Although Fiscal 2013 ended a five year upward trend, this indicator has remained relatively stable considering loss of personnel during the period.

Autopsy Report and Toxicology Case Completion (median days)



Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Desired Direction	5yr Trend
	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY13	FY14		
★ Median time for scene arrivals by medicolegal investigators (MLIs) (hours)	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	*	1.7	Down	Up
Deaths reported	25,558	26,105	26,503	25,941	27,265	*	*	Neutral	Neutral
Cases where Chief Medical Examiner takes jurisdiction	6,818	7,135	7,114	7,152	7,095	*	*	Neutral	Neutral

★ Critical Indicator "NA" - means Not Available in this report ↓ ↑ shows desired direction

### Goal 1b: Perform autopsies and examinations necessary to issue timely death certificates.

While the number of autopsies that OCME performs annually has held steady at about 5,000, in Fiscal 2013 a 28 percent improvement from Fiscal 2012 occurred in the median time to complete autopsy reports, after three consecutive years of increased time required for completion.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Desired Direction	5yr Trend
	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY13	FY14		
★ Median time to complete autopsy reports (days)	48.0	53.5	61.5	69.5	50.0	51.0	51.0	Down	Up
★ Median time to complete toxicology cases (days)	30.5	35.0	40.5	60.0	55.0	28.0	28.0	Down	Up
Median time to complete toxicology DUI (driving under the influence) cases (days)	13.5	13.0	16.0	15.0	14.0	10.0	10.0	Down	Neutral
Median time to complete toxicology sexual assault cases (days)	17.5	17.0	21.0	30.5	27.0	17.0	17.0	Down	Up

★ Critical Indicator "NA" - means Not Available in this report ↓ ↑ shows desired direction

### Goal 1c: Provide timely investigation for all cremation requests.

The number of cremation requests increased to 14,036 in Fiscal 2013, an increase of seven percent. The median time to process cremation requests rose to 2.1 hours, an increase of more than 60 percent from Fiscal 2012.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Desired Direction	5yr Trend
	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY13	FY14		
Median time to process cremation requests (hours)	0.9	1.2	1.2	1.3	2.1	1.5	1.5	Down	Up

★ Critical Indicator "NA" - means Not Available in this report ↓ ↑ shows desired direction

### Service 2: Provide mortuary services to the City.

#### Goal 2a: Recover and transport decedents to City mortuary facilities in a timely manner.

In Fiscal 2013, OCME achieved a 22 percent reduction in the time required to remove decedents from non-hospital death scenes after investigation. Despite the five year upward trend in this indicator, the reduction in Fiscal 2013 brought it back to the level of Fiscal 2010 and was the second lowest over the five year span.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Desired Direction	5yr Trend
	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY13	FY14		
Number of decedents' remains transported and stored by OCME	9,366	9,620	9,714	9,558	7,803	*	*	Neutral	Down
Median time to remove decedents from scene (non-hospital) after investigation (hours)	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.7	*	*	Down	Up

★ Critical Indicator "NA" - means Not Available in this report ↓ ↑ shows desired direction

**Service 3: Respond to disasters and emergencies when fatalities are involved.**  
**Goal 3a: Provide rapid response and safe fatality management services to the City.**

While no mass fatality events occurred in the City in Fiscal 2013, OCME performed the Phase IV sifting operations of its ongoing human remains recovery project at the World Trade Center site. These operations resulted in the recovery of an additional 89 remains from the disaster site in Fiscal 2013.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Desired Direction	5yr Trend
	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY13	FY14		
Remains recovered following a disaster or mass fatality incident (cumulative)	21,745	21,813	21,818	21,818	21,906	*	*	Neutral	Neutral

★ Critical Indicator "NA" - means Not Available in this report ↕ shows desired direction

**Goal 3b: Identify victims of disasters and return their remains to families in a timely manner.**

OCME succeeded in identifying an additional 615 remains in Fiscal 2013, through retesting with increasingly advanced techniques, and three new victim identifications were made of remains from the 9/11 WTC attacks in Fiscal 2013.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Desired Direction	5yr Trend
	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY13	FY14		
Remains identified following a disaster (cumulative)	12,762	12,770	12,810	13,024	13,639	*	*	Up	Neutral

★ Critical Indicator "NA" - means Not Available in this report ↕ shows desired direction

**Service 4: Provide DNA services to the City for forensic purposes.**  
**Goal 4a: Provide timely and accurate DNA laboratory services for criminal justice purposes.**

This is the area in which performance was most concerning for OCME, as staff attrition alone cannot account for the rise in turnaround time for the completion of all types of DNA cases. Overall, the median time for OCME to complete analysis of a DNA case rose from three months to nearly five months in Fiscal 2013, the most pronounced increase in a five year upward trend. In mid-fiscal year, OCME changed its management team for DNA. It put in place a new, highly skilled director of the forensics division who is an expert in management and forensic science to bring about significant improvements in Fiscal 2014.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Desired Direction	5yr Trend
	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY13	FY14		
Median days to complete analysis of a DNA case	89.8	76.0	83.0	88.0	138.0	75.0	75.0	Down	Up
★ Median time to complete DNA homicide cases, from evidence submission to report (days)	97.0	112.0	114.0	111.0	161.0	90.0	90.0	Down	Up
★ Median time to complete DNA sexual assault cases, from evidence submission to report (days)	17.5	19.0	27.0	46.0	89.0	50.0	50.0	Down	Up
★ Median time to complete DNA property crime cases, from evidence submission to report (days)	70.5	58.0	65.0	68.0	139.0	70.0	70.0	Down	Up
DNA matches with profiles in database	1,264	1,264	1,629	1,791	1,618	*	*	Neutral	Up

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## Agency Customer Service

OCME continued to respond to all e-mails received, and nearly all the letters, within 14 days in Fiscal 2013.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		5yr Trend
	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY13	FY14	
Customer Experience								
E-mails responded to in 14 days (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	Neutral
Letters responded to in 14 days (%)	NA	100	100	100	98	100	100	NA
Completed customer requests for interpretation	24	125	469	404	164	NA	NA	Up

## Agency Resources

Resource Indicators	Actual					Plan <sup>1</sup>		5yr Trend
	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY13	FY14	
Expenditures (\$000,000) <sup>2</sup>	\$65.9	\$65.6	\$62.6	\$60.9	\$73.4	\$73.3	\$56.8	Neutral
Revenues (\$000)	\$6	\$2	\$39	\$92	\$67	\$503	\$503	NA
Personnel	652	652	606	582	583	654	636	Down
Overtime paid (\$000,000)	\$1.4	\$1.8	\$1.9	\$2.5	\$2.8	\$2.3	\$1.8	Up

<sup>1</sup>Authorized Budget Level      <sup>2</sup>Expenditures include all funds.      "NA" - Not Available in this report

## Noteworthy Changes, Additions or Deletions

- With the retirement of long-time Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Charles S. Hirsch in February 2013, Dr. Barbara Sampson was appointed acting chief medical examiner. Up until her recent appointment, Dr. Sampson served as first deputy chief medical examiner, and has been with the agency for 15 years.

For more information on the agency, please visit: [www.nyc.gov/ocme](http://www.nyc.gov/ocme).