



WHAT WE DO

The Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) serves public health and the criminal justice system through forensic science. OCME's independent investigations of deaths and analysis of evidence provide answers to families and communities during times of profound need. OCME is responsible for investigating deaths resulting from criminal violence, accident or suicide; that occur suddenly and when in apparent good health; when unattended by a physician; in a correctional facility or in custody of any criminal justice entity; or occurring in any suspicious or unusual manner or threat to public health. These types of cases are referred to as being under "Medical Examiner jurisdiction." The Office also reviews all applications for permits to cremate the body of a person who dies in New York City. The Office provides additional forensic services, including DNA testing, to support investigations. OCME also manages all functions of the City mortuary, including the retrieval and processing of unclaimed deceased bodies, and facilitates final disposition. Finally, OCME maintains a specialized mass fatality management team ready to support the City in responding to mass fatalities and other disasters.

FOCUS ON EQUITY

To best serve all New Yorkers—regardless of economic ability—OCME operates Family Services Centers in all five boroughs so that all communities have equal service access. At these centers, staff interact with family members, medical practitioners, and other advisors to receive and verify information that will assist in determining the identity of deceased persons and aid in final disposition. For families who may need or choose interment of their loved ones in the City Cemetery, OCME provides an opportunity for a final viewing before burial. In addition, OCME also serves as the independent pathologist for families by performing its own impartial death investigations and autopsies, free from undue influence by legal or medical communities or law enforcement. OCME develops and maintains a workplace culture in which employment and advancement decisions are made fairly and employees are treated equitably, regardless of race/ethnicity, age, gender, religion/creed, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation. This is accomplished through agency wide training and continual engagement with managers to ensure familiarity with the city's EEO, diversity and inclusion policies, and through incorporating these policies into recruitment, selection, promotion, and workplace activities so that all employees feel welcome and inspired to succeed.

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 Complete autopsy reports in a timely manner to best serve families, the criminal justice system and other stakeholders.
- Goal 1c Provide diligent investigation for all cremation requests.
- Goal 1d Certify death certificates in a timely manner.

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 services to the City for forensic purposes.

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

HOW WE PERFORMED IN FISCAL 2020

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 2020, OCME took jurisdiction in 7,547 cases, approximately the same as in the previous year. OCME death scene investigators, called medicolegal investigators (MLIs), respond to the scene of reported deaths that fall within Medical Examiner jurisdiction. The median time for scene arrivals by investigators (MLIs) remained steady at 1.8 hours. The number of deaths reported to OCME increased, corresponding to the surge in NYC deaths during the pandemic. Not all decedents reported were transported or handled by OCME. The majority of the decedents who passed away in health care facilities were claimed by funeral directors.

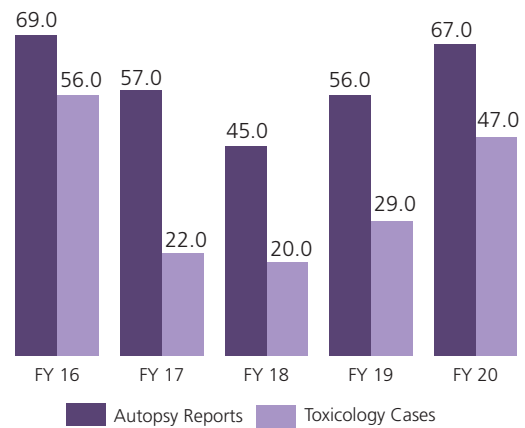
Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
Median time for scene arrivals by medicolegal investigators (MLIs) (hours)	2.4	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.8	*	*	Down	Down
Deaths reported	27,674	28,940	30,213	30,964	65,712	*	*	Up	*
★ Cases where Chief Medical Examiner takes jurisdiction	7,375	7,704	7,632	7,554	7,547	*	*	Neutral	*

★ Critical Indicator "NA" Not Available ↑↓ Directional Target * None

Goal 1b Complete autopsy reports in a timely manner to best serve families, the criminal justice system and other stakeholders.

OCME forensic pathologists examined 7,568 decedents in Fiscal 2020, up from 7,325 in Fiscal 2019. OCME performed 4,854 autopsies in Fiscal 2020, down from the 5,399 autopsies in Fiscal 2019. The median time to complete OCME autopsy reports in Fiscal 2020 was 67 days, an 11-day increase from the previous year while well within the 90-day target. In the midst of the pandemic, the OCME laboratories were essentially closed but for some high-priority cases and the majority of laboratory staff were temporarily reassigned to assist in the mortuary to keep up with the surge in deaths. This contributed to a delay in reports that are relied upon by Medical Examiners to help complete autopsy reports.

Autopsy Report and Toxicology Results Completion (median days)



Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
★ Median time to complete autopsy reports (days)	69.0	57.0	45.0	56.0	67.0	90.0	90.0	Neutral	Down

★ Critical Indicator "NA" Not Available ↑↓ Directional Target * None

Goal 1c Provide diligent investigation for all cremation requests.

OCME reviews all applications for a permit to cremate the body of any person who dies in the City. When OCME's review of the cremation application reveals a cause or manner of death that falls within the Medical Examiner jurisdiction, the application will be rejected and OCME will investigate accordingly. However, once the investigation is complete, family members will have the opportunity to have the remains of their loved ones cremated if they wish.

In Fiscal 2020, OCME responded to 27,863 cremation requests, up from 17,148 last year. This increase came about during the months of March through June where OCME received 16,115 requests, a number that approached the entire Fiscal 2019 total. This increase corresponds to the surge in deaths NYC experienced during the pandemic to date. OCME rejected 159 cremation requests after investigation and converted them over to the Medical Examiner jurisdiction.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
Total cremation requests received and investigated as requirement of processing	15,719	16,525	17,252	17,148	27,863	*	*	Up	*
★ Cremation requests rejected after investigation and turned over to Medical Examiner jurisdiction	63	84	91	140	159	*	*	Up	*
★ Critical Indicator	"NA" Not Available		↑↓ Directional Target						* None

Goal 1d Certify death certificates in a timely manner.

In Fiscal 2020, the median time for OCME to certify the cause and manner of death for all death certificates was 15.6 hours after initial receipt of decedents' remains, well within the 72-hour target.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
★ Median time to certify death certificates after initial receipt of decedents' remains (hours)	19.7	15.8	16.6	16.3	15.6	72.0	72.0	Down	Down
★ Critical Indicator	"NA" Not Available		↑↓ Directional Target						* None

SERVICE 2 Provide mortuary services to the City.

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

In addition to those cases falling under Medical Examiner jurisdiction, the Office provides mortuary services for the City, including the retrieval and processing of unclaimed deceased bodies. In Fiscal 2020, the median time from OCME receipt of decedents' remains to "Ready to Release" was well under an hour. This is because during the months of March through June, the vast majority of deceased that arrived at OCME constituted non-forensic cases. Because these decedents arrive at OCME having been already identified, generally having come from health care facilities, they are typically ready to release almost as soon as they arrive. The large number of these cases resulted in a median time under one hour. The median time to clear and release to funeral directors per case was 37 minutes, as OCME brought in additional staff to assist mortuary operations, including the federal resources, private contractors and OCME laboratory staff who were reassigned to mortuary duties.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
Decedents' remains transported and stored by OCME	10,108	10,330	11,255	11,281	17,606	*	*	Up	*
★ Median time from OCME receipt of decedents' remains to "Ready to Release" status (hours)	14.38	12.91	11.82	11.59	0.10	↓	↓	Down	Down
Median time to clear and release to third party for final disposition, per case (minutes)	33.0	34.0	35.0	35.0	37.0	*	*	Up	Down
★ Critical Indicator	"NA" Not Available		↑↓ Directional Target						* None

SERVICE 3 Respond to disasters and emergencies when fatalities are involved.

Goal 3a Provide rapid response and safe fatality management services to the City.

OCME recovered no new remains of the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks in Fiscal 2020.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
Remains recovered following the September 11, 2001 attacks (cumulative)	21,905	21,905	21,905	21,905	21,905	*	*	Neutral	*
★ Critical Indicator	"NA" Not Available	↑↓ Directional Target						* None	

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

OCME continues to identify remains of the victims of the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks. In Fiscal 2020, an additional 93 remains were identified.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
Remains identified following the September 11, 2001 attacks (cumulative)	14,308	14,348	14,467	14,608	14,701	*	*	Neutral	Up
★ Critical Indicator	"NA" Not Available	↑↓ Directional Target						* None	

SERVICE 4 Provide services to the City for forensic purposes.

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

The Forensic Biology Department's Fiscal 2020 median times for DNA case completions in each case type are shown below. The median times to complete DNA cases all decreased in Fiscal 2020 compared to Fiscal 2019. These improved case turnaround times (TAT) were attributable to progress at the beginning of Fiscal 2020 when Lean Six Sigma improvement programs were reaping benefits and several new staff hired in previous years were fully trained and processing cases. Subsequently, because of the pandemic, the Forensic Biology lab closed for three months and a limited number of staff were processing a very small number of priority cases. As a result, turnaround times rose towards the end of the year, though the overall annual median DNA case turnaround times remained within their targets due to the lower numbers earlier in the year. The number of DNA matches with profiles in the database decreased from 11,042 in Fiscal 2019 to 5,988 in Fiscal 2020. This was due to the lab closure and a reduced number of staff working on only a small number of priority cases.

Median turnaround times for the Forensic Toxicology Department were 30 days or less for all case types (postmortem, DUI, sexual assault) at the start of Fiscal 2020. By the end of the first half of Fiscal 2020, the median turnaround times had increased to between 34 to 38 days due to preparations for the new speedy trial and pre-trial discovery reforms that went into effect January 1, 2020. These changes are attributable to Article 245 of the New York State Criminal Procedure Law (CPL), which requires OCME laboratories to supply City prosecutors with comprehensive information on thousands of preexisting cases and all new cases going forward, and to deliver this information as soon as possible and no later than 60 days before trial. CPL Article 245 has thus created a significant workload impact for OCME.

At the end of the third quarter the median Forensic Toxicology TATs had increased to between 42 and 46 days. Prior to COVID-19, the Forensic Toxicology Department was already feeling the full force of the new discovery law and had only just welcomed new recruits brought in to assist with that workload. The pandemic caused the temporary closure of the Forensic Toxicology laboratories for over three months and resulted in a median turnaround time for postmortem cases of 153 days for the month of June alone.

At the end of Fiscal 2020, there were more than 1,370 cases pending tests, of which 75 percent were aged to over 90 days. Furthermore, there were over 1,300 new cases collected during the laboratory closure and placed in storage by the OCME Evidence Unit awaiting the reopening of the Forensic Toxicology Laboratory. OCME will accession these cases and begin testing on them in early Fiscal 2021. Accordingly, the backlog initially attributed to the new discovery law was then compounded by the closure of the laboratories caused by COVID-19, resulting in increased turnaround times for the Forensic Biology and Toxicology Departments in Fiscal 2020 and, OCME anticipates, into Fiscal 2021.

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
Median time to complete analysis of a DNA case (days)	45.0	53.0	69.0	59.0	51.0	60.0	60.0	Up	Down
★ Median time to complete DNA homicide cases, from evidence submission to report (days)	39.0	44.0	38.0	47.0	39.0	45.0	45.0	Neutral	Down
★ Median time to complete DNA sexual assault cases, from evidence submission to report (days)	36.0	36.0	40.0	32.0	31.0	45.0	45.0	Down	Down
★ Median time to complete DNA property crime cases, from evidence submission to report (days)	57.0	63.0	172.0	149.0	50.0	120.0	120.0	Up	Down
DNA matches with profiles in database	7,758	8,719	8,766	11,042	5,988	*	*	Neutral	*
★ Median time to complete toxicology cases (days)	56.0	22.0	20.0	29.0	47.0	30.0	30.0	Down	Down
Median time to complete toxicology DUI (driving under the influence) cases (days)	43.0	17.0	14.0	23.0	42.0	30.0	30.0	Neutral	Down
Median time to complete toxicology sexual assault cases (days)	84.0	23.0	18.0	28.0	43.0	30.0	30.0	Down	Down
★ Critical Indicator	"NA" Not Available	↑↓ Directional Target	* None						

AGENCY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Performance Indicators	Actual					Target		Trend	
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	5-Year	Desired Direction
Customer Experience									
Completed customer requests for interpretation	664	1,091	1,318	1,525	1,161	*	*	Up	*
Letters responded to in 14 days (%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	*	*	Neutral	Up
E-mails responded to in 14 days (%)	100%	100%	98%	95%	92%	*	*	Neutral	Up
★ Critical Indicator	"NA" Not Available	↑↓ Directional Target	* None						

AGENCY RESOURCES

Resource Indicators	Actual ¹					Plan ²		5yr Trend
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY20	FY21	
Expenditures (\$000,000) ³	\$68.6	\$71.9	\$76.6	\$84.7	\$150.4	\$95.6	\$90.4	Up
Revenues (\$000)	\$36	\$76	\$8	\$2	\$2	\$50	\$50	Down
Personnel	566	591	639	672	716	791	769	Up
Overtime paid (\$000,000)	\$5.1	\$5.5	\$5.8	\$6.7	\$2.6	\$2.6	\$2.5	Down
¹ Actual financial amounts for the current fiscal year are not yet final. Final fiscal year actuals, from the Comptroller's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, will be reported in the next PMMR. Refer to the "Indicator Definitions" at nyc.gov/mmr for details. ² Authorized Budget Level ³ Expenditures include all funds "NA" - Not Available * None								

SPENDING AND BUDGET INFORMATION

Where possible, the relationship between an agency's goals and its expenditures and planned resources, by budgetary unit of appropriation (UA), is shown in the 'Applicable MMR Goals' column. Each relationship is not necessarily exhaustive or exclusive. Any one goal may be connected to multiple UAs, and any UA may be connected to multiple goals.

Unit of Appropriation	Expenditures FY19 ² (\$000,000)	Modified Budget FY20 ² (\$000,000)	Applicable MMR Goals ⁴
106 - Office of Chief Medical Examiner (Personal Services)	\$63.1	\$68.7	All
116 - Office of Chief Medical Examiner (Other Than Personal Services)	\$21.6	\$81.7	All
Agency Total ¹	\$84.7	\$150.4	

¹OCME is contained within the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and appropriations are made through that agency. ²Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2019. Includes all funds. ³City of New York Adopted Budget for Fiscal 2020, as of June 2020. Includes all funds. ⁴Refer to agency goals listed at front of chapter. "NA" Not Available * None

NOTEWORTHY CHANGES, ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS

None.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information on the agency, please visit: www.nyc.gov/ocme.