Medicolegal Scene Investigation and Forensic Autopsy in Cases of Pediatric Death
Interactions with CDR
• **State (§ 841-3):**
  • “...the result of violence, or as the result of any accident, or by suicide, or suddenly when in apparent health, or when unattended by a physician, or in prison, or in a suspicious or unusual manner, or within twenty-four hours after admission to a hospital or institution...”

• **County (Chapter 13, Section 6-1306.):**
  • “… the medical examiner shall go to the body and take charge of it and shall make a full investigation concerning the medical cause of death.”
  • Section 6-1307: “If, in the opinion of either the medical examiner or the prosecuting attorney, an autopsy is necessary, the autopsy shall be performed by the medical examiner. A detailed description of the findings of such autopsy and the conclusions drawn therefrom shall be filed in the department of the medical examiner.”
• County (Section 6-1305):
  • “When any person dies in the city as a result of violence or by a casualty or by apparent suicide or suddenly when in apparent health or when not under the care of a physician or when in jail or in prison or within twenty-four hours after admission to a hospital or in any suspicious or unusual manner, it shall be the duty of the person having knowledge of such death immediately to notify the department of the medical examiner and the police department.”

• Death Certificate keywords:
Medicolegal Investigators

- 9 medicolegal death investigators are employed by the MED and staff the office 24/7, 365 days/year.
- They are the “eyes and ears“ of the Medical Examiner.
  - Take “death calls.“
  - Respond to, document, and photograph the scene of death.
  - Interview witnesses.
  - Work with HPD investigators and the ME if she attends the scene.
  - Take photographs of the body, if at the scene, or at the hospital.
  - Take possession of the body and arrange for transport.
  - Check the body into the morgue.
  - Notify N.O.K, if necessary.
  - Obtain medical, Police, CWS, military, and other records.
  - Obtain information needed to confirm the identity of the deceased.
  - Write the MED investigative report.
Scene Investigation: The Body
Scene II:
The Body
Scene III: The Environment
Scene IV: The Environment
Scene V: The Environment
Doll Recreation
Doll Recreation
Clues!
Pediatric Autopsy

- Medical record review.
- Full body X-rays.
- Viral and bacterial cultures.
- Complete external and internal examinations.
  - Orbits and eyes.
  - Spinal cord.
  - “Cut the limbs down.”
- Histology of all major organs.
  - Also injury sites, eyes, and bone.
- Full blood (and occasionally other) toxicology.
- Analysis of vitreous humor.
- Neuropathology, radiology, anthropology, odontology, pediatric, and other consultation(s).
- Metabolic disease screening.
- Documented with photographs, diagrams, and forms, including a final growth chart.
Cause and Manner of Death

- **Cause of death:**
  - The underlying disease, injury, or poison which creates the anatomic or physiologic aberration that culminates in death.

- **Manner of Death:**
  - The classification of an individual's death based on the interpretation of the autopsy findings, scene investigation, and all available circumstantial data into one of the following categories: natural, accident, homicide, suicide, or undetermined. ("Pending" may also be used if additional studies are in progress).
Integrating the findings

Cause and Manner of Death

Scene Investigation

Autopsy Findings

Clinical History

Cause and Manner of Death
Maintain Records

- Identifying and demographic information.
- X-rays, scene and autopsy photos.
- Investigative, laboratory, and autopsy reports.
- “Stock jar”, tissue blocks, microscopic slides, and sometimes a portion of or whole organ(s).
Testify in Court: Sworn in as an Expert

"Your Honor, the defense concedes that the prosecution witness is an expert in his field!"
Testify in Court: Present and Give an Analysis of the Evidence
Testify in Court: Undergo Direct and Cross Examination
Testify in Court: Competing Expert Opinions
Participate in Multi-disciplinary Conferences